

North Iowa Farmers Market Consumer & Vendor Study

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North Iowa Farmers Market: Overview



- ▶ Local farmers market located in Mason City, Iowa.
- ▶ Located in a city with a population of 27,704 (2013).
- ▶ Currently has around 15 vendors that sell baked goods, locally grown food, and arts & crafts.

Project Purpose



Purpose

- ▶ Research the best practices and trends in the industry with comparable markets.
- ▶ Explore necessary steps to a healthy and profitable metropolitan farmers market.

Deliverables

- ▶ Weekly updates
- ▶ Competitive Analysis
- ▶ Final report of the teams findings with recommendations.

Environment Analysis



Industry Overview

According to the USDA

- 8,144 markets in the US, 229 in Iowa.
- Approximately 150,000 farmers, ranchers and agricultural entrepreneurs are selling products in US.
- Over \$1.5 billion in sales in 2015.
- \$16 million in sales through SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

Dynamics of External Environment

Advantages

- ▶ United States Dept. of Agriculture and Agricultural Marketing Service announce \$26.8 million available in funding for local small town markets 2016. (WSJ, 2016)
- ▶ Increase in trends in supporting local commerce “buy local” by consumers.

Disadvantages

- ▶ Deflation in food prices due to increase in surplus and cause low income for farmers leaving an effect on markets. (WSJ, 2016)
 - ▶ Threat of substitution with large superstores due to convenience factor for customers.
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Competitive Analysis

Name of Market	Day(s) of Week	Time of Day	Product(s)	Event/Entertainment
North Iowa Farmers Market pop. 27,704	Tuesday & Fridays	3 - 6 pm	Produce, Baked Goods, Candles, Crafts, Jams & Preserves	No
Marion Farmers Market pop. 34,768	Saturdays	8 - 11:30 am	Produce, Fresh baked goods, flowers and homemade crafts	No - It coincides with the Market of Marion's Special Events (another program.)
Muscatine Area Farmers Market - pop. 23,034	Tuesdays &	Tue (2:30-5:30 pm) Sat (7:30 - 11:30 am)	Tuesday - just produce. Sat - produce, meat, baked goods, arts/crafts, etc.	Tuesday - No; Saturday - Yes, live groups from around the area
Fort Dodge Market On Central pop. 24,639	Every 2nd & 4th Saturday of Month	9am - 1 pm	Produce, Arts/Crafts, meat, fresh baked goods, food vendors on site, local business involvement, etc	Yes - Live music or groups from city
Coralville Farmers Market pop. 20,092	Mondays & Thursdays	5 - 7 pm	Produce, Baked Goods, Eggs, Flowers, Jams & Preserves, Local Honey, Wine, Handmade art & jewelry	Yes- live music & kids/family theme days. (specifically acoustic music)

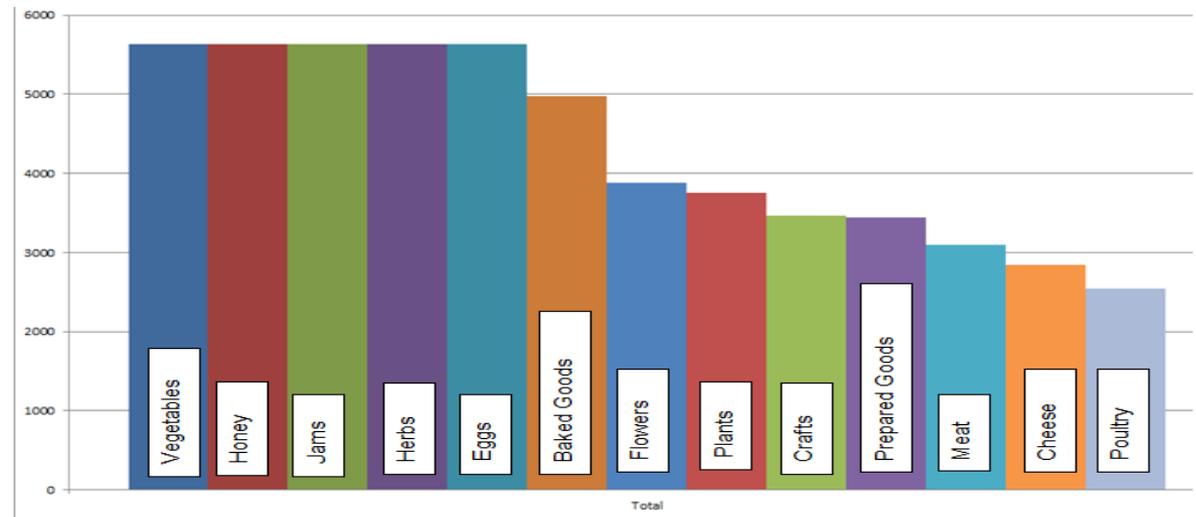
Firm's Overall Market Position

- ▶ The farmers market works with an average of 15 vendors.
- ▶ Average of 50 customers per market day.
- ▶ Grocer market only.
- ▶ Overarching goal is to increase vendor and customer participation and to find a more feasible location for the market .



Best Practices & Secondary Research

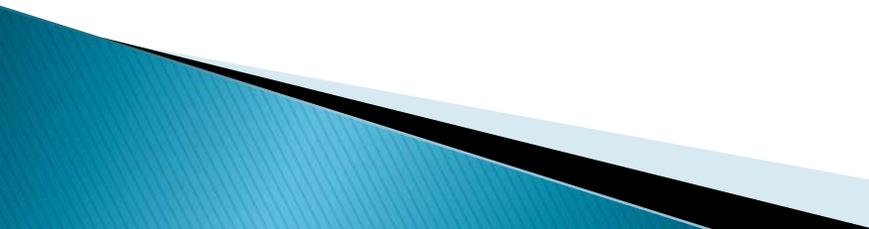
- ▶ Secondary Research through USDA articles for best practices and types of products to sell for farmers market. (See graph below, demonstrates out of all 8,000 plus markets this is the amount of markets that sell each type of product specifically.)
- ▶ Interviewed Market Managers of various comparable markets in size and demographics in the midwest on their best practices.



Primary Research – Vendors

- ▶ Goal – obtain primary research on vendor perceptions of the market.
 - ▶ Interview 20 Vendors (present, past and potential).
 - ▶ Find what the vendors agreed and disagreed with most about the market in current state and their suggestions for improvements.
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Vendor Interview Questions

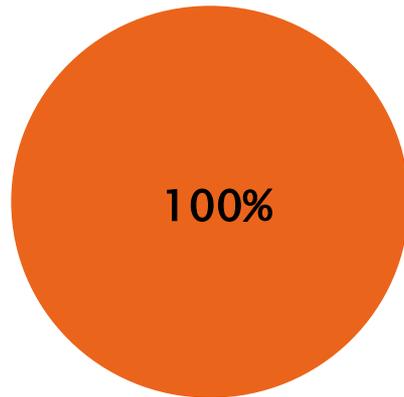
- ▶ What type of product do you sell?
 - ▶ How long have you been attending the market?
 - ▶ Which day of the week would you prefer?
 - ▶ What time of day would you prefer?
 - ▶ Would any particular day or time of the week have more of an impact on your sales either negatively or positively?
 - ▶ Do you do your own advertising? If so, what types? (social media, etc)
 - ▶ Do you participate in other farmer's markets besides Mason City? If so, which ones and when?
 - ▶ Would you be willing to participate in a brainstorming night with members of the board, other small business owners and vendors to help prepare for the next market season?
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Vendor Interview Results

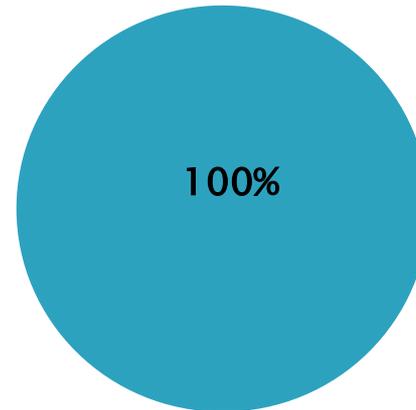
- ▶ Products offered – produce, fruit, jams/jellies, fresh baked goods, knitted craft items, quilts, candles and organic aromatherapy items.
 - ▶ All vendors participate in other markets, Clear Lake, Cedar Rapids and Des Moines.
 - ▶ Prefer Friday over Tuesday Mason City markets (15 out of 20 said they wouldn't participate in any other days offered).
 - ▶ All vendors rely on WOM advertising, few have any other forms of advertising besides what the market does currently with Facebook.
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Vendor Interview Results

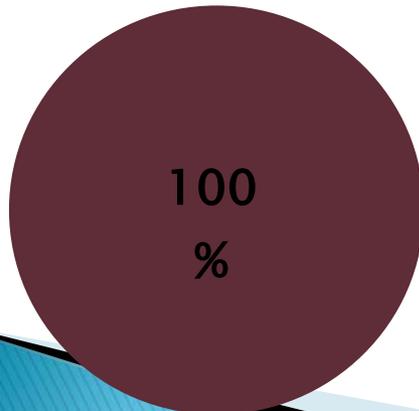
Brainstorm Event for Market Future



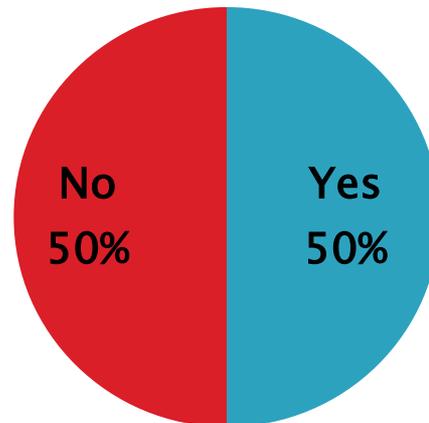
Discontent with Location



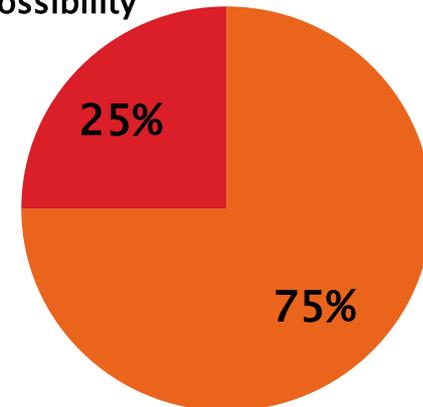
Appreciate Board Involvement



Timeliness of Board Response



Referenced K-Mart Location as Possibility



Yes
No

Market Manager Interviews

- ▶ Strong board involvement and participation. (Hibbard, 2016)
 - ▶ Market manager that oversaw everything, coordinated marketing and vendors. (Hibbard, 2016)
 - ▶ Hold workshops for stakeholders of farmers market to brainstorm ideas. (Bunda, 2016)
 - ▶ Annual Iowa Farmers Market Association Conference, way to connect and brainstorm with other managers from farmers markets. (DeFosse, 2016)
 - ▶ Offer a class to teach vendors how to utilize social media, most vendors are not tech savvy and it would increase advertising for the market. (DeFosse, 2016)
 - ▶ First market day of the week be strictly produce and goods and the second market day be more of an event. (Bunda, 2016)
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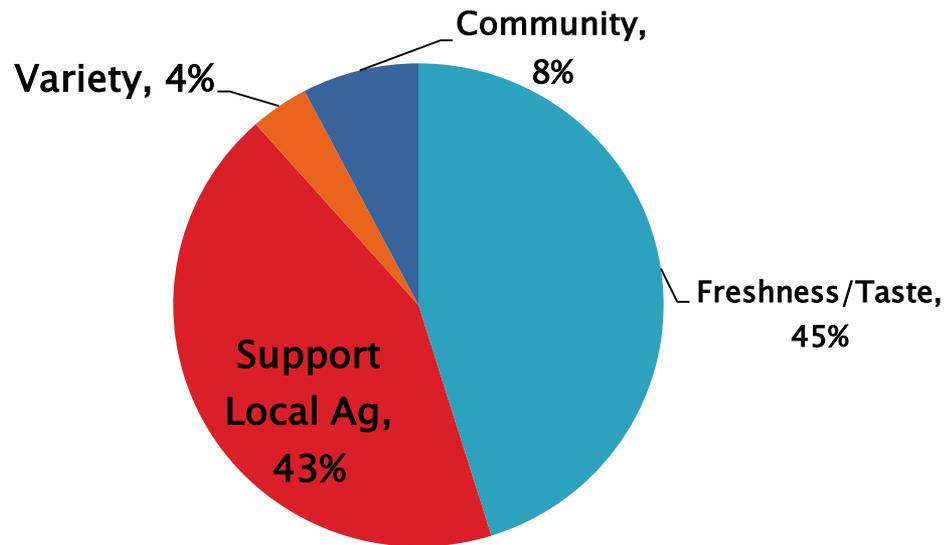
Secondary Research – Consumer Survey



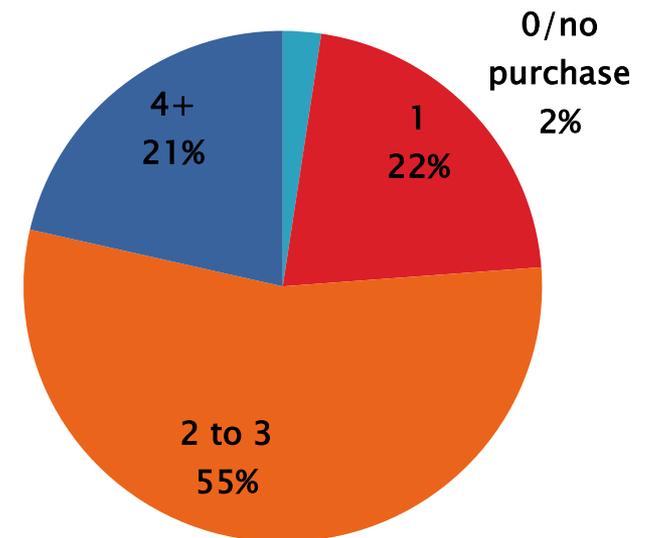
- ▶ Goal – To obtain information on consumer perception and participation in the market.
- ▶ NIFM conducted their own DOT Survey based off of USDA articles on ascertaining best information from consumers for farmers markets.
- ▶ Issues with varying number of responses.

Consumer Dot Survey – Day 1

What is the main reason you shop at the farmers market?

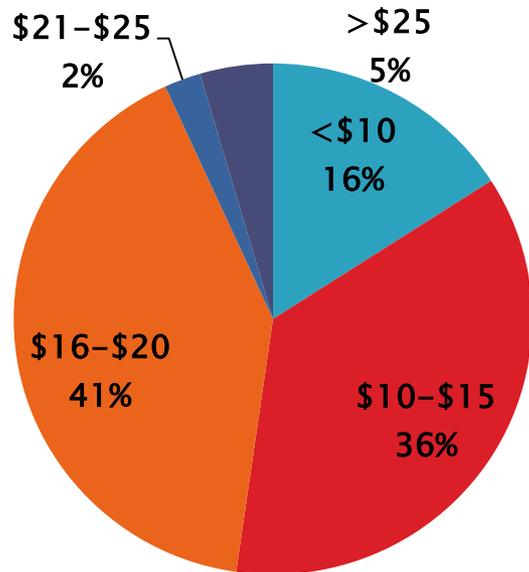


How many vendors did you purchase from at the market today?

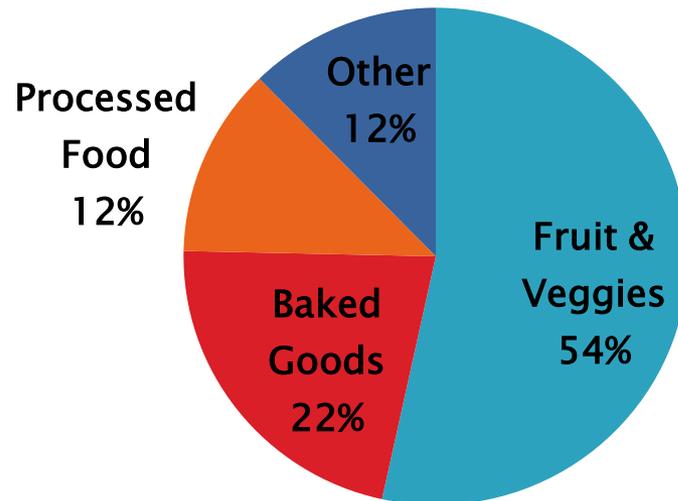


Dot Survey – Day 1 Cont'd

How much money do you usually spend when you go to the market?

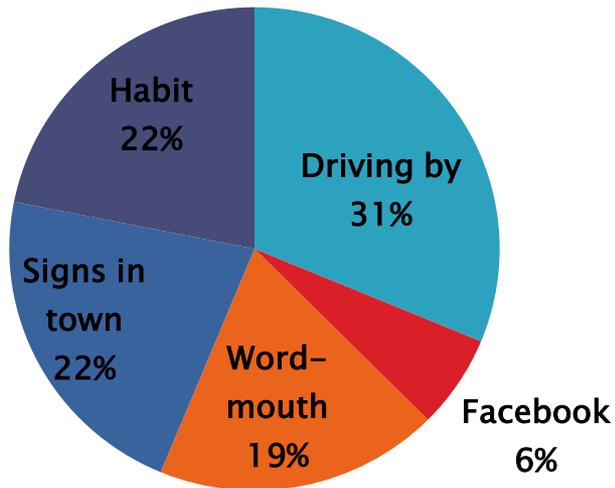


What did you purchase at the market today?

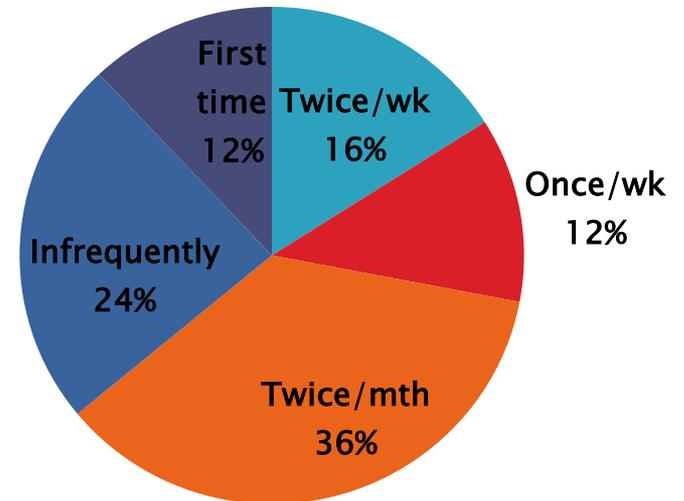


Consumer Dot Survey – Day 2

How did you learn/are you reminded about the market?

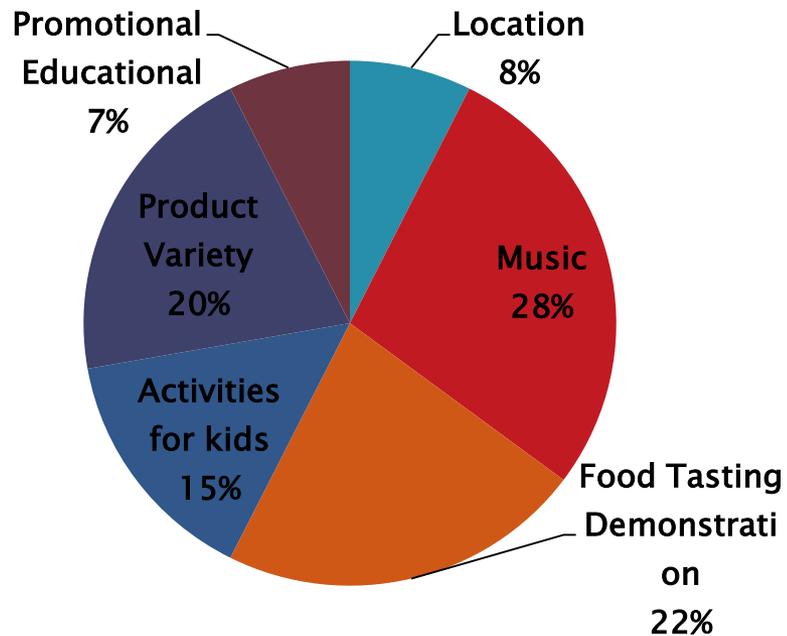


How often do you shop at the Northern Iowa Farmers Market?

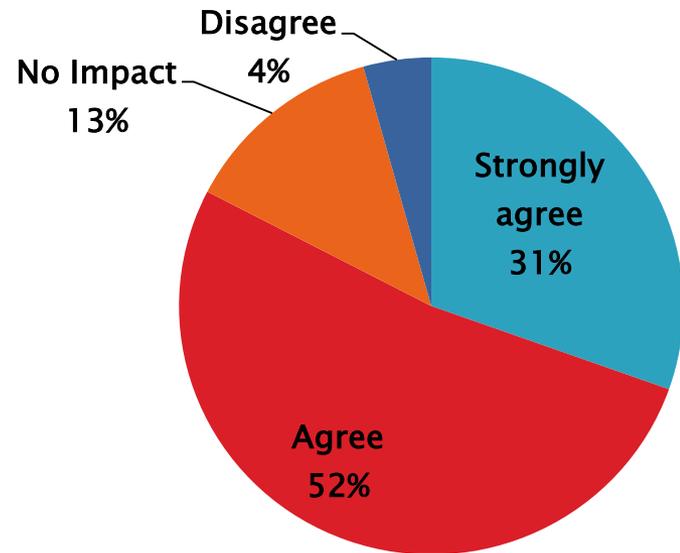


Dot Survey – Day 2 Cont'd

What could be improved about the farmers market?



My consumption of fruits and veggies has increased since shopping at the market



Recommendations

- ▶ Feature events, such as musical performances, once or twice month to attract a larger crowd. (Defosse, 2016)
 - ▶ Attend the annual Iowa Farmers Market Association Conference to connect and brainstorm with other managers. (Defosse, 2016)
 - ▶ Include small local businesses to set up vendor booths or host/sponsor events (Hibbard, 2016).
 - ▶ Hold a brainstorming event to allow vendors to partake in discussion about the future of the market. (Bunda, 2016)
 - ▶ Maintain current days of the week due to vendors participation in other markets, but review possibility of dropping Tuesday markets and having an event based Friday evening market. (Vendor Interviews)
 - ▶ Offer a survey based on location and amenities to the vendors. (Lassise, 2016)
 - ▶ Expand variety of products, such as meat producers. (USDA Chart and Vendor Interviews)
 - ▶ Provide a free class to vendors on how to utilize social media so that consumers are more aware of the market. (Defosse, 2016)
 - ▶ Increase social media presence. (DOT Survey– Day 2 Results)
 - ▶ Research ROI and benefit of having music, food tasting demonstrations, and increased product variety.
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Expert Interview List

Melissa Bull, Former/Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Laura Bunda, Market Manager, Fort Dodge Market on Central

Jennifer DeFosse, Muscatine Area Farmers Market

Cedar Rapids Farmers Market Manager

Sheryle Ehlke, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Pat Ennis, Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Wayde Groh, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Aiden Hamilton, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Matt Hibbard, Coralville Farmers Market Manager

Becke Huang, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Deb Lassise, Board of Directors, North Iowa Farmers Market Board

Camille Lee, Vendor and Board Member to North Iowa Farmers Market

Marion Farmers Market Manager

Beulah Miller, Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Jane Morris, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Donna Peek, Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Robin Qualy, Infrequent Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Bill Rassmussen, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Beth Smith, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Brian Smith, St. Joseph Market Manager

Darell Spear, Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Steven Strasheim, Possible Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Gary Tomlinson, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Will Wainright, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Marty Walsh, Financial Director, Mason City, City Council Board

Daniel Zimmerman, Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market

Leroy Zimmerman, Infrequent Vendor to North Iowa Farmers Market