

Local Farmer's Markets as a Tool for Community Development

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+ Why study the farmer's markets of Gainesville?

- Combating food insecurity requires exploration of the impacts of different approaches.
- Besides providing food, what else can farmer's markets provide a community?
- With an increasing interest in local foods, farmers markets have gained popularity in rural and urban areas in the U.S. As of August 2014, 8,144 farmers markets were listed in the USDA's (2014) *National Farmers Market Directory*.

+ Purpose & Objectives of the study



■ Purpose:

- To explore the socio-cultural dimensions of farmer's markets in Gainesville.

■ The objectives of this study were:

- describe the local food vendors
- investigate the types of consumers at two local farmer's markets of Gainesville

+ Methodology

- Ethnography of two farmer's markets (4 months)
- Role of participant observer:
 - According to Bernard (2011), a person can be a participant observer as an outsider who participates in some aspects of life around them and record what they can.
- Field notes
 - Themes for every observation
- Semi-structured interviews with both vendors and market customers (6 total)



+ Painting the Picture

- Union Street Farmers Market-
 - Geographically set in the middle of downtown Gainesville
 - The stands are set in a serpentine manner and close together
 - Sells a variety of products, including locally grown produce, value added products, live plants, and knickknacks



+ Painting the Picture

■ Haile Plantation Farmer's Market

- West of Gainesville in the Haile Plantation community center
- The set up is narrow and runs along the main street with all the vendors facing each other.
- Sells produce, value-added products, and some knickknack vendors.



+ Findings- Market Vendors

- Culture of their own
 - “The weird thing about farmers markets is that there is no other business that I know that competitors are assumed to be buddies. We are all supposed to get along yet in some ways we are competing with each other at the market. It does set up a dynamic that people who are selling have to figure out how to navigate” (Inf. 1).
- Signage varied from vendor to vendor
- Catering to different clientele
 - ‘organic’, ‘pesticide-free’, ‘free-range’
 - SNAP available



+ Findings- Market Vendors Continued...

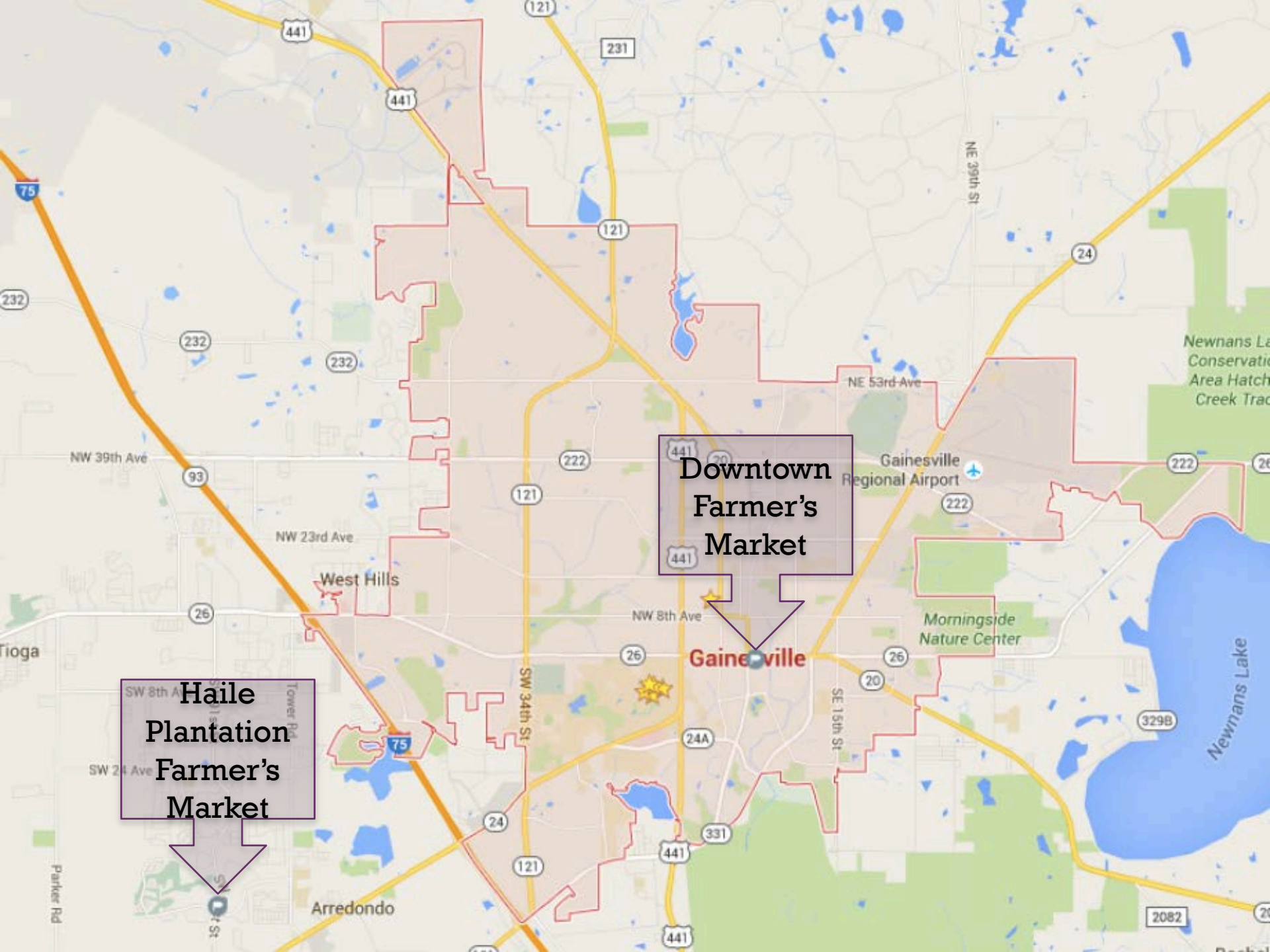
- Engaging and friendly:
 - “A successful vendor gets into the life of their customers” (Inf. 1)
- Vendors seek interaction with customers:
 - “The market gives me the opportunity to mix with people and try to relate. Food is an easy way to do that. What you grow has very profound connections with people” (Inf.1).



+ Findings- Market Customers

- Different customers for each market:
 - **Location influences demographics of customers**
 - Union Street Market-
 - “I would say... the people are so diverse. There are hipsters, homeless, students, and local community members” (Inf. 4).
 - Haile Plantation Market-
 - “The Haile customers come to be seen. They are mostly higher in SES than those that come to downtown. Makes for a different market day” (Inf. 2).





**Downtown
Farmer's
Market**

**Haile
Plantation
Farmer's
Market**

+ Findings- Market Customers Continued...

- Buying at the local farmers markets is a conscious decision that involves many aspects:
 - **access, feeling of community, and buying fresh, local produce**
 - “I like to shop at the farmer’s markets because I have access to produce at an affordable price. As well as supporting local farmers and growers. I like to feel good about being a ‘locavore’. This way I am lessening my carbon footprint by going to the market and getting things that are grown right here” (Inf. 3).
 - “I like to buy local produce to help offset some of the costs of globalization. Transportation costs are cheaper if I buy from someone local. I know it’s essentially all free trade; it’s going from the producer to the consumer. This is really important to me” (Inf. 6).



+ Findings- Market Customers Continued...



■ Relation to their food producers is important

- “I recognize the value of organic agriculture for the environment. Being someone who cares for the preservation of the environment, I like to buy from those that also take care of the environment” (Inf. 3).
- “The people who come to the markets have a belief system about their food choices that they share with the farmers. They identify with this group” (Inf. 1).

■ Quality and variety valued over price

- “I chose to buy my peppers from one farmer versus the next guy because of his product. The peppers I was getting for the price he was asking were better. He also had a variety of colors for the peppers and I appreciate that” (Inf. 5).

+ Conclusions

- Vendors cater to the different clientele by providing products reflecting their assumed values.
- Market customers seek the feeling of community provided by the market– developing relationships-> social capital
- Farmer's Markets tended to be a very social event no matter location.





Implications



- Opening question: Besides providing food, what can farmer's markets provide a community?
- Local food systems play a variety of significant roles for a community:
 - increase access to healthy and affordable foods
 - provide a sense of community
 - help to combat food insecurity
 - play an economic role
 - (Herman, Harrison, Afifi, & Jenks, 2008; Hughes, Brown, Kmiller, & McConnell, 2008; Lyson, Gillespie, & Hilchey, 1995; Sharp, Imerman, & Peters, 2002).
- Interactions and relationships can lead to an increase in the community's social capital

+ Just a few final thoughts

- Are farmer's markets truly a way to reduce food insecurity?
- Can farmer's markets help to rebuild a community?
- How can farmer's markets attract and serve lower income community members?



+ Thank you!

