DON’T EVEN THINK OF PARKING HERE:
DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS’ PERCEPT OF A
FARMERS’ MARKET IN CHICO, CALIFORNIA

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A Thesis

Presented

To the Faculty of

California State University, Chico

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Geography

Rural and Town Planning Option

____________

by

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Spring 2012
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ABSTRACT

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Farmers’ markets are a lynchpin of sustainability planning. They are outlets for local food and they improve regional livelihoods and nutrition, while reducing commodity chain food miles. Since their resurgence in the 1970s, the number of farmers’ markets has grown at an increasing rate. However, not everyone views farmers’ markets positively. Established business interests may object to traffic congestion and economic competition. As representatives of all constituencies, local governments must balance economic imperatives with supporting local farmers, ensuring access to fresh, healthy foods. To do so requires a better understanding of possible resistance to farmers’ markets. This study examines personal and professional perceptions of surrounding merchants about the Saturday morning Chico Certified Farmers’ Market’s tenancy in a municipal
parking lot. Some merchants believe their business is negatively impacted by reduced customer parking on Saturday mornings. An internet survey was conducted of members of the Downtown Chico Business Association about their concerns with the market’s presence in the lot. Despite how organized certain business owners were in critiquing the market, results show that the majority of survey respondents are in fact favorable to the farmers’ market. Survey responses were mapped using Geographic Information Systems. This showed that unfavorable merchants tend to cluster within one block of the market. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected merchants and community members to further explore their attitudes and beliefs about how the farmers’ market helps or hinders downtown economics. Other farmers’ markets in western states were examined for similar contentious histories and possible resolution between merchants and farmers’ markets. Careful consideration must be given to locating a new farmers’ market to minimize possible conflict while maximizing access and possible benefits.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of farmers’ markets has more than doubled in the last ten years, to more than four thousand, making it one of the fastest-growing segments of the food marketplace. (Pollan 2008, 158)

The Saturday morning Chico Certified farmers’ market (CCFM), celebrating thirty years downtown, is a much acclaimed amenity in Chico, California. In a survey of CCFM shopping behaviors conducted in late 2009, one customer said “It’s an institution, part of what makes Chico Chico” (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). Since 1993, the farmers’ market has been located in the City’s Chico’s municipal parking lot 1 (MPL1) (Figure 1). This municipal parking lot provides leased and metered parking spaces for customers of downtown businesses. The parking lot lacks distinctiveness, other than some nice trees, but on Saturday mornings a sense of place emerges when the first farmers and customers show up. This sense of place is articulated through the personal and economic interactions occurring at the farmers’ market.

During the market’s tenure in MPL1, intermittent concerns have been raised by surrounding merchants and City Council members about safety, traffic congestion, rest room access, and competition for sales. Some members of the Downtown Chico Business Association (DCBA) have wanted the CCFM moved, in order to free up parking for their businesses on Saturday mornings. Through formal and informal outlets, from City council public hearings to letters to the editor, City officials, CCFM representatives...
Figure 1. Downtown Chico. Source: Knigge, LaDonna and Steve Verbrugge. 2009. Chico Certified Farmers’ Market Study. Unpublished work. Department of Geography, California State University, Chico. Used with permission.

and citizen groups have had their say. But downtown business owners, many afraid to take a public stance on this issue for fear of alienating customers, had not been studied before this thesis. City staff and Council members are big supporters of the market (Holcombe 2010; Rucker 2010; Tillman 2010). They have a vision for Chico’s downtown economy and welfare, while planning for the City and its foodshed within the confines of regional and global commodity webs.

The questions this thesis asks are (1) How do merchants in downtown Chico perceive the market? (2) Do they believe the market is good for the City and local
business, as the City believes, or do they see it as disruptive? (3) Where are merchants located in relation to the market? (4) If any merchants see the market’s location as detrimental, what solutions do they propose?

During the two years of preparation for this study, the City’s Internal Affairs Committee, while considering annual renewal of the market’s franchise agreement, once again considered the market’s location. There was a general consensus in the press, and discussed in formal and informal meetings, that only a few merchants next to the farmers’ market disapproved of the CCFM’s presence in MPL1 (Urseny 2009).

Statement of the Problem

To reiterate, this study investigates how downtown merchants perceive the “problem” of the farmers’ market. It investigates how many of them value the presence of the farmers’ market, both personally and as a part of doing business in downtown Chico. It asks whether a relationship exists between merchant favorability and proximity to the market. In addition, I report on whether merchants offer any solutions to problems of parking, congestion, and competition. Finally, I investigate how other cities have harmonized the diverse interests of stakeholders in these conflicts and their outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate downtown merchant viewpoints about the parking lot location of a farmers’ market in Chico. It is generally assumed that farmers’ markets provide many environmental, social, and economic benefits for producers, consumers, and communities. Farmers’ markets are, in fact, used as an economic
revitalization tool in struggling downtowns (Feenstra 1997). However, according to Ben Feldman, Manager of the Berkeley farmers’ market, conflict over farmers’ market site selection is a persistent occurrence in cities across the country (Feldman 2009). While benefits of farmers’ markets have been studied, further investigation is needed about conflicts between farmers’ markets and pre-existing businesses (Lyson 2005; Holloway and Kneafsey 2000). This study will contribute to comprehensive farmers’ market site analyses by examining the merchant viewpoint. It will help market sponsors and communities engaged in making decisions about site selection and to anticipate or mitigate possible opposition. It may be of interest to farmers’ market organizers and planners. It may also interest City staff, residents and merchants.

Methods

This mixed methods study began with a survey questionnaire of DCBA members conducted by two classes at CSU, Chico to examine this controversy. The survey questionnaire provided quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. While quantitative data is specific and provides opportunities for generalization and spatial analysis, qualitative data can add rich, contextual information that complements and amplifies quantitative findings (Creswell 2009). Research continued with interviews of fifteen key players in the controversy, including seven DCBA members, providing additional qualitative data. Secondary sources provided a framework for approaching this long-standing conflict.
Limitations of the Study

This research touches upon several important themes and topics that are beyond the scope of this study. First, it does not cover all farmers’ market activities in Chico. The DCBA conducts a farmers’ market on Thursday nights, which will not be discussed. Second, this study does not address the controversy of downtown parking structures: the need for them, their design, building and placement. While I relate the history of the parking structure controversy to inform my discussion of parking in downtown Chico, I take no position on whether one is needed. Third, I do not distinguish between the two political groups active in farmers’ market controversies in Chico—the Friends of Downtown (FOD) and its recent spin-off group, the Friends of the Market. I instead refer to the FOD only. Fourth, I do not investigate economic impacts of this dispute. Fifth, I did not attend any DCBA meetings. And finally, I did not interview anyone in local media, despite requests for appointments.

Definitions of Terms and Acronyms

1. Agricultural urbanism: The integration of food and agriculture systems into all aspects of community planning and design (de la Salle 2010, 36).

2. CCFM: Chico Certified farmers’ market.

3. CSU, Chico: California State University, Chico.


5. Economic revitalization: Using economic and land use policies to prop up or revive economic health in declining business districts.
6. Farmers’ markets: Periodic markets where growers sell farm products directly to consumers (Brown, 2001).

7. FOD: Friends of Downtown.

8. Foodshed: Similar to watershed, a metaphor about where food comes from and how it gets to us, area accessed for foodstuffs (Kloppenburg et al., 1996).

9. GIS: Geographic Information Systems, a method and means for layering geographic data into maps.

10. Parkshed: Surrounding a destination, the area comprising preferred parking opportunities.

11. Producers: at farmers’ markets, includes vendors, growers, farmers and managers.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section on farmers’ markets examines social and economic benefits of farmers’ markets to cities where they reside, customer motivations for patronizing farmers’ markets, and shopping behavior. I conclude this section by discussing criticisms of farmers’ markets.

Farmers’ Markets

Benefits of Farmers’ Markets

Farmers’ markets, as a component of local food systems, provide environmental, social and economic benefits to producers, consumers, and communities (Feenstra 1997; Jolly 2005; LaTrobe 2001; Lyson 1995; Tiemann 2004). Environmental benefits include reduced energy use for food processing, packaging, and transport (Winter 2003; Shakow 1981), and the preservation of agricultural land. Social benefits include providing a gathering space for like-minded people, a focal point for creating community, and celebrating local foods and culture. Economic benefits of farmers’ markets include employment creation, business survival, support for local services and suppliers, and increased retention of income within the local community.

The range of benefits of farmers’ markets is encapsulated by the emergent philosophy of agricultural urbanism (AU). AU combines the tenets and tools of
sustainable food systems and urban planning to revert global industrial food networks, what de la Salle and Holland (2010) refer to as the twentieth century food system, back to the local scale. Negative outcomes of the twentieth century food system include a decline in food quality, increases in disease and pandemics in farm animals, a rise in human obesity and swelling health care costs, the loss of small scale farm jobs to dehumanizing corporate food jobs, economic consolidation external to communities, increased power and political clout of big agro-pharma companies, depletion of agricultural land and wildlife habitat, pollution, and abuse of energy and resources used for packaging, transport, and roadways. AU advocates integrating land use, transportation, urban design, energy systems, and waste management to work towards building more self-reliant closed-loop communities. Food originally emerged from a unique place and culture. Relinking food and place through AU would produce environmental, social, and economic benefits at all levels, from the personal to the global.

Social Benefits of Farmers’ Markets

Farmers’ markets, as an aspect of civic agriculture and food network relocalization, provide social benefits. Lyson (1995) said that farmers’ markets, as an element of civic agriculture, can improve self-reliance, increase prosperity, and build a more robust social web. Upon visiting a farmers’ market, you may see customers chatting with vendors, friends greeting one another, or representatives of groups selling items or promoting their causes. This bustle may mask a market’s important function as a public space and community focal point and the thought that goes into making these spaces successful. Many farmers’ markets have a distinct spatial construct. Where supermarkets
were designed to isolate shoppers and create a canned product-promoting experience, many farmers’ markets are laid out to emphasize cross flow and sociability (LaTrobe 2001). This renders them desirable “third places” for vendors and customers, by providing social spaces other than home or work to experience diversity, revelry, and community interaction. Thus the farmers’ market acts as a public space for informal association (Tiemann 2008). Markets also provide a venue for people to communicate about and live according to their political ideals (Tiemann 2008). When farmers’ markets are located in central places, they allow more equitable access to food provision, providing another social benefit.

There have been many studies of farmers’ market customers, their motivations and behaviors. In 2000, Holloway and Kneafsey found that the entire farmers’ market experience is being consumed and not just the goods being sold. Customers value the entire shopping experience, more than simply the goods purchased, provided by farmers’ markets. Tiemann (2008) found that attending markets allows customers to experience the flow of seasons over the year as different agricultural crops are offered for sale as they become ready. This variety can provide urban residents with access to nature and a reference point for seasonal progression (Sanderson et al. 2005). LaTrobe (2001) found that most customers stated a preference for flavor and health benefits of fresh or organic foods. Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002) conducted a study of market customers in North Carolina to provide information to farmers about how to better satisfy their customers. She found, among regular patrons, that their motivation for shopping at the market was equally driven by their desire for fresh products and for the social atmosphere
encountered at the market. A Swedish study by Magnusson et al (2002), discovered that respondents’ motivations for choosing organic foods tended towards the egoistic, as in the pursuit of personal health, rather than altruistic, as in supporting local farmers or agriculture. In 2004, Stephenson and Lev (2004) studied residents of two similarly-sized cities in Oregon, with divergent occupations, income, and education levels and political affiliation. When asked to rank their reasons for supporting local agriculture, including patronizing farmers’ markets, they found a remarkable similarity between these two communities. Respondents gave “keep farmers in the area” as their number one reason for buying local farm products. The next most frequent response was “support local economy,” followed by “local products are better,” and “enjoy buying experience.”

Lotte Streisinger (2010), founder of the Eugene Saturday Market, said it took five years for downtown merchants to accept the market because it does not follow the customary rules for downtown merchandising. She explained that digression is exactly what makes the market so appealing to consumers: “Personal contact with the producer and the stories they can tell.” But in addition to economic and social advantages, farmers’ markets, as an aspect of food network relocalization, provide profound environmental benefits.

**Economic Benefits of Farmers’ Markets**

Studies of farmers’ market producers illustrate their many economic benefits for local businesses and communities. Economic benefits of farmers’ markets have been examined from the perspective of producers (vendors and market managers) and consumers.
The positive benefits of farmers’ markets, from the vantage point of vendors, comprising growers, crafters, and farmers, have been established. For one thing, they provide an additional or alternate sales outlet. Lyson’s (1995) study of New York found that their motivations include a desire to add “extra income in addition to other income sources which are limited” and “not having the capital necessary to open a farm stand or store.” According to Feenstra and Lewis (1999), farmers’ markets are a marketing recourse for small farms that may have been marginalized from wholesale networks. Large produce buyers dictate prices that may not support a small farm (Stephenson and Lev 2004). Small growers may not be able to produce the quantity, size, or symmetry of product desired by wholesalers (Sanderson et al. 2005). These are benefits of farmers’ markets from the point of view of market vendors. However, market managers also recount economic benefits of farmers’ markets for local businesses and communities.

Farmers’ market managers surveyed in California, Iowa, and New York said that markets develop beneficial connections with local businesses, including cooperative advertising, sharing rest rooms, and jointly sponsoring community events. Further, 78 percent of them said they positively affect local businesses by attracting foot traffic (Feenstra and Lewis 1999). Eighty-six percent of farmers’ market managers in New Jersey, surveyed in 1997, said that they coexist with local businesses without tension (Govindasamy et al. 1998). These studies show, in general, that farmers’ market managers see farmers’ markets as beneficial to local businesses.

Economic benefits of farmers’ markets for local businesses have also been studied from the viewpoint of market customers. Studies of the shopping behavior of
farmers’ market customers show a loyal, and dedicated, contingent of repeat customers, who also shop at neighboring businesses on market days. Cummings, Kora, and Murray’s (1999) Ontario study of farmers’ market customers, mentioned above, examined shopping behavior in addition to shopping motivation. In this survey of 4,603 market attendees, Cummings et al. found that 64 percent of customers have been shopping at their local market for more than five years, with only 3 percent being first-time visitors, and 50 percent shop at local businesses during their market trip. Andreatta and Wickliffe’s (2002) study of 463 consumers at farmers’ markets in North Carolina found that 90 percent of respondents named “visiting the market” as their primary reason for making the trip and 63 percent shopped outside the market during the trip. A 2001 study of 671 customers of farmers’ markets in California, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Washington, D.C. by Project for Public Spaces for the Ford Foundation found that 60 percent of respondents said they had or would visit nearby stores on market days. In addition, 60 percent of those respondents indicated they only shopped at those other businesses on market days (Project for Public Spaces 2003). The 2009 study of Chico Certified farmers’ market customers elicited similar results. Out of 256 customers surveyed, 93 percent were repeat customers, 66 percent said that coming to the market was their main reason for coming downtown, and 67 percent had, or planned to, shop or eat downtown during their shopping trip (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). We see that according to farmers’ market customers, markets are economically beneficial for local businesses, but how much do farmers’ markets benefit communities as a whole, including the local business community?
Brown (2001) wrote that the direct economic impact of farmers’ markets in communities is difficult to measure, partly due to inadequate records and because of the problem of defining a farmers’ market. Brown also said “although local businesses may initially regard a farmers’ market as a threat, businesses are reported to notice an increase in trade on market days” (172). Authorities have also written about the economic benefits of farmers’ markets for local communities. Cummings et al.’s (1998) study (of vendors, managers, and customers) of nineteen farmers’ markets in Ontario concludes that they “clearly demonstrate that Farmers’ Markets generate economic benefits across the community” (57). This study suggested that if a multiplier applicable to agriculture was used, markets generate the local spending of two dollars for every dollar traded at the market. Remember that vendors and market managers are members of the community as well, illustrating that economic benefits for communities include employment creation (Cummings 1998), increased business for local services and suppliers of farmers’ markets (Lyson 1995), and retention of income within the community (de la Salle and Holland 2010).

An interesting historical note is in Gouglas’ (1996) discussion of the Covent Garden Market in London, Ontario’s central business district from 1843-1915. Gouglas found that the market was not only a net gain for the community, but “the centre-piece of the city’s booster activity” (3). Local governments have recognized the positive economic impacts of farmers’ markets. Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) noted that, despite objections from local businesses around the Stratford farmers’ market, the town council
“concluded that the farmers’ market was contributing more to the local economy than was being lost through the diversion of consumers to a new consumption area” (291).

Farmers’ markets have been recognized as so economically advantageous that they have been used as a tool for economic revitalization. The University of California Small Farm Center’s manual on how to start farmers’ markets states, “Farmers’ markets draw consumers into central downtown areas, local malls, and store parking lots . . . which generates sales and exposure for local businesses (Jolly 2005, 5). Tiemann (2008) found that (they) “bring people downtown in the evening or on the weekend, helping revive a lagging central business district, or adding foot traffic to an already healthy downtown” (473).

There is undoubtedly much evidence that farmers’ markets provide economic benefits for local businesses and communities, according to producers and consumers. They have even been used as a means to economic revitalization. While farmers’ markets have grown in number and provided many benefits, they have not escaped criticism.

Criticisms of Farmers’ Markets

The number of farmers’ markets in the United States has increased dramatically since 1976, when there were only 541 farmers’ markets in the U.S. (Brown 2001). The National Directory of Farmers’ Markets showed 1,755 markets in 1994. By 2010, the number of farmers’ markets had more than tripled with 6,132 markets (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2010). This illustrates the rapid U.S. growth of farmers’ markets over the last thirty-five years. Due to this expansion, some criticisms have been leveled regarding social and economic impacts. Social criticisms of farmers’ markets are more cautionary
than condemning and center on concerns about class and privilege. For example, in Hinrichs’s (2000) discussion of farmers’ markets, she concluded that while they are a step towards personalizing grower/consumer relationships, they fail to decommodify food. While direct agricultural markets have been applauded as a social alternative to traditional food procurement venues, nevertheless, farmers’ market producers and consumers still must consider pricing, competition, quality control and value. She cautioned against conflating spatial and social relations, saying the grower and buyer may be face to face but still have inequality (Hinrichs). Hinrichs continued to say that producer/consumer relationships at farmers’ markets contain power differentials present in greater society, especially when market vendors and customers are dissimilar in class, levels of education, and income.

There has also been controversy about the pricing of goods at farmers’ markets. Prices at farmers’ markets may be cheaper than at grocers, but they may also be more expensive, depending on market location and clientele. At “boutique” markets, prices can be higher than at utilitarian farmers’ markets or grocery stores (Albrecht 2010). Alkon (2008) determined that high farmers’ market prices could deny the non-privileged positive health impacts from avoiding conventional foods, constituting an inverted quarantine. To combat this, there have been recent movements to improve access of low income and ethnic neighborhoods to reasonably priced fresh, healthy foods by establishing farmers’ markets in urban food-insecure communities (Alkon 2008; Hinrichs 2000). In a criticism of farmers’ markets not addressing social justice, Holloway and Kneafsey
(2000) cautioned that championing them as challenging conventional patterns of production and consumption could be premature, if they eventually become bureaucratized.

The loudest criticisms of farmers’ markets focus on trade and land use and how they affect local economies. Like street vendors, farmers’ markets are part of an alternative economy (Sherry 1990). A definition of street vendors fits farmers’ markets as well, “the retail trading of goods in streets and other public axes such as alleyways” (Bromley 2000, 1). The informal sector provides some advantages to entrepreneurs and cities. It encourages petty capitalism, small business incubation, and provides lively activity to urban streetscapes. But the informal sector also faces ambivalence from municipalities and off-street businesses that raise concerns about congestion, hazards, crime, and unfair competition, due to lower overhead costs and fewer taxes remitted (Bromley 2000).

Conflicts between market managers and vendors and local businesses have occurred as the number of farmers’ markets has increased. Neighboring businesses may object to perceived unfair competition for sales (Cummings et al. 1998) or parking (Feenstra and Lewis 1999). But some farmers’ markets cooperate with local businesses to increase their standing in the community. The Millbrae, California, Chamber of Commerce-sponsored farmers’ market partners with local businesses in advertising and market day logistics (Millbrae 2010). Local merchants around the market, held in a city parking lot, offer special deals to customers on market days (Planning for Healthy Places 2009).

According to Ben Feldman (2010) of the Ecology Center, manager of the Berkeley farmers’ market, conflict over farmers’ market site selection is a persistent
occurrence in cities across the country. Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) concluded that further investigation is needed about economic conflicts between farmers’ markets and pre-existing businesses.

Transportation

I introduce transportation planning into this discussion because the contested site is a parking lot, parking is one of the reasons given by surrounding businesses for objection to the Chico Certified farmers’ market (CCFM), and transportation policy may contribute to a solution for the conflict.

“Because cities consist of spatially separated, specialized land uses, people must travel to obtain necessary goods and services” (Hanson and Giuliano 2004, 3). Well-planned transportation systems are vital for accessible cities and downtowns and require specific land use patterns, like transit-oriented development and multiple uses. Infrastructure must be designed for connectivity and flow within the city and between the city and its surroundings. Multiple travel modes must be included in transportation plans, including transit, cycling, and walking. When people walk, bike, take transit, or carpool instead of driving, it reduces emissions, road costs, noise, traffic, and congestion generated by vehicles. Careful design of parking systems impacts automobile use and choice of travel mode (Stubbs 2002). Measures are needed to reduce single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) use in urban areas. Demand management achieves this goal through the design of parking location, access and pricing, which affect consumer motivations and behavior (Hanson and Giuliano 2004).
Placing farmers’ markets in urban parking lots can create greater land-use efficiencies. For instance, Sacramento’s Florin farmers’ market is held in a marginal space, under a freeway overpass, unused on weekends (Best 2009). On Sundays, this space intended for automobile storage houses an entirely different use of land, a farmers’ market. Creating more dense urban forms, such as in placing a market in a city parking lot, requires fewer trips to possibly more distant grocery destinations.

Reducing traditional parking requirements increases the vitality of downtowns and business. In San Francisco, Louise Davies Hall was built with no additional parking so symphony goers who drive must walk from their cars. While walking, they frequent local bars and restaurants (Shoup 2005). Businesses may think controlled parking deters customers from downtown shopping, diverting sales to businesses on the fringe (Rye et al. 2008). A survey in Edinburgh’s city center found that retail and business owners made comments sharply critical of measures limiting parking. When asked to estimate, 44 percent said more than half of their sales are to customers parked nearby on the street. However, shoppers surveyed concurrently indicated 29 percent of them had arrived by auto and some had parked off-street (Rye et al. 2008). Here we see that business owners surveyed were incorrect in their estimation of the travel and parking behaviors of their customers. Parking is an important part of downtown equations.

Transportation is, therefore, an essential part of the functioning of farmers’ markets. When there is friction between farmers’ markets and local businesses, parking is listed as the primary reason. While 86 percent of respondents in the New Jersey study of farmers’ market managers, mentioned above, said there were no problems between
market vendors and pre-existing merchants, 14 percent of managers noted that when there was friction, the main culprit was parking, with either not enough for the market or competition for parking spots with local businesses (Govindasamy et al. 1998). In the Feenstra and Lewis (1999) study previously mentioned, market managers said that their most common complaint was a lack of parking for their customers. To solve this, they adjusted their market practices using methods including scheduling markets on “off days,” providing a drive-up service, or providing alternate transportation to the market via shuttles (Feenstra and Lewis). These results echo the findings of my study of Downtown Chico Business Association (DCBA) members concerning the location of the Saturday farmers’ market in Chico and will be revisited in my findings and conclusion.

Conclusion

The literature shows that farmers’ markets are profoundly beneficial economically, socially, and environmentally, but that they are not without some controversy. Communications and transportation technologies have shrunk the world. While global industrial food systems have improved food access and security in some instances, they have delinked food from place and required unsustainable energy and resource use. Foods and cuisines originally had specific spatial origins. Now, U.S. grocers commonly sell produce from other continents. Farmers’ markets, as a component of local food systems, retain jobs and incomes in communities, and may promote personal and public health by providing access to healthier foods and less food-related disease. However, these benefits come with concerns about equity and competition for sales and parking. These studies provide a background for discussion of my study of downtown Chico
merchant attitudes concerning the CCFM’s tenancy in a municipal parking lot and inform my subsequent analysis and conclusions.
CHAPTER III

CONTEXT OF STUDY

The City of Chico (pop. 85,000) is a college town and a commercial and service center for surrounding nut and fruit growers in California’s Sacramento Valley. Many small city central business districts similar to those of Chico’s have dwindled, with businesses moving to the city’s fringe. Chico’s downtown, next to the CSU, Chico campus, remains vibrant and diverse, with a small town feel, a mixture of historic and new buildings, and easy access for pedestrians, bicycles, cars, and parking. According to a downtown business owner, “Downtown is the civic center, the banking center, the cultural center and . . . a family of merchants” (Montague 2007, 6A). One participant in my survey of DCBA members commented that “It’s the place you bring out of town visitors to get a look at Chico” (Lukens 2009). Chico has become a pocket of liberalism in a conservative region due to generations of students and professors who fall in love with the town and stay (Kidd 2010). While 24.4 percent of U.S. citizens over age 25 have bachelor’s degrees or higher, in Chico the rate is 36.7 percent (U.S. Census 2000).

Downtown merchants are required to belong to the DCBA, a nonprofit corporation formed by local businesspeople in 1975. The DCBA’s mission is to promote “a vital and thriving retail and cultural center” in the 40 square blocks that compose downtown Chico (DCBA 2009).
Municipal parking lot 1 (MPL1) is in this area and contains 165 parking spaces. According to the City’s Municipal Code, merchants have a vested interest in downtown parking lots (Rucker 2010). Merchants pay a Downtown Parking and Business Improvement Area fee to the City (Chico 2010). Some DCBA members lease parking spaces in downtown parking lots for themselves and their employees and customers. In 1992, the City allowed the CCFM to occupy 76 spaces in MPL1 on Saturday mornings. The remaining spaces in the 165-space lot are available for customer, handicapped, and vendor parking during the market. In September of 1993, this agreement was solidified with a franchise agreement. The market pays a yearly franchise fee of $170 to the City and the franchise agreement is subject to renewal each year.

The CCFM is a mutual benefit corporation and a member of the DCBA, paying one membership fee. Vending spaces at the CCFM are made available to local producers from Butte, Tehama, Shasta, Glenn, Yuba, Sutter, Nevada, and Colusa counties. Each vendor pays the CCFM a $50 annual membership fee and a weekly stall rental fee. The CCFM operates year round from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. every Saturday. Including set up and tear down time, the market is on site 8-10 hours per week. Attendance was recently estimated to be from 3,000 to 3,500 people per day (Knigge and Gitelson 2009).

On Saturdays, loyal farmers’ market customers purchase produce, meat, cheese, eggs, grains, plants, baked goods, prepared foods, and crafts. In addition to shopping, market attendees socialize, network, and promote causes. Farmers’ market customers relate strongly to their experience of community at this market location (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). In an Internal Affairs Committee meeting, Chico Council member, Jim
Walker said, “I know that there’s a feeling you get when you walk in there—that it’s something extremely special” (Speer 2009).

Customers have varied shopping habits. Some arrive, buy goods from their favorite vendors, and leave. Some stay all day. Forty-five percent of market customers who answered this survey questionnaire were between 40 and 59 years old. Fifty-five percent of respondents were women. Eighty-six percent were repeat customers. Sixty percent live three miles or less from the market. Sixty-nine percent drove to the market. Ten percent said they had a difficult time finding parking. Thirty one percent used alternative travel modes, such as walking, biking, and transit (Knigge and Gitelson 2009).

CCFM management and customers have shown a strong attachment to the market’s present location. “CCFM advocates conflate the market with this one particular space” (Rucker 2010). Others are less enthusiastic about this particular location given that it is just a parking lot. Any talk about moving the market brings forth impassioned testimony from all sides. The CCFM and the DCBA have a history of conflict. Some merchants believe the market’s occupation of 76 prime parking spaces discourages customers from coming downtown to shop on Saturdays. As one merchant said when I interviewed him, Saturday “should be the biggest retail shopping day” (Catterall 2010). Tom Hall, owner of the adjacent Garden Walk Mall, estimates an annual loss of $50,000 in sales for his tenants because of the CCFM’s occupancy of MPL1 on Saturday mornings (Hall 2010). Some merchants don’t open on Saturday mornings because of the market. Some resent competing with the market. Some believe the market has an unfair advantage by avoiding costs and responsibilities of conducting a permanent business. Similar
sentiments have also been voiced about the Saturday Market in Eugene, Oregon, where downtown merchants noted that the farmers’ market did not pay taxes that the merchants were subjected to. In response to this criticism, the Eugene market manager Lotte Streisinger replied, “the Market occurs only once a week; it is a non-profit organization, and . . . a community attraction and event” (Streisinger 2010).

What is the context of this debate? The location of the farmers’ market has been worrying the DCBA for over ten years. In 2001, the DCBA conducted a survey of its members about the location of the CCFM. At that time, over 68 percent of merchant respondents chose to keep the market in its current location. The rejected alternative was to hold the market in closed city streets. Most respondents said this would impede access and circulation. They saw this option as a threat to business (Davis 2001). So we see that the impact of the CCFM on downtown Chico parking is an ongoing concern.

Chico Parking Policy

The City “maintains downtown parking lots … for the convenience of the general public that visit the downtown retail area. By managing the availability of parking spaces, the Downtown Business District sustains economic viability by allowing customers to park conveniently” (City of Chico Department of Traffic and Engineering 2010). The Downtown Business District contains more than 2,000 parking spaces, of which 80 percent are metered (City of Chico Department of Traffic and Engineering 2010). Parking in lots and metered spaces is free on weekends and designated holidays under current parking policy.
In July 2002, the City commissioned the Downtown Parking Management and Implementations Study by Omni-Means (Omni-Means 2003). Though researchers found that people surveyed downtown did not think there was a parking problem, they recommended increasing parking capacity by building a parking structure downtown. Interestingly, this survey found that 78.3 percent of respondents walked up to five minutes from parking to their destination, and 63 percent said that 4.5 blocks is the furthest they would walk (Omni-Means 2003). There was no mention of the CCFM in this study. In April 2004, the City Council responded to study recommendations by voting to erect a parking structure on MPL1 (Gascoyne 2004). They planned to finance the parking structure by extending parking meter hours and doubling rates to purchase a bond. Plans for the parking structure included maintaining a space for the market, but it was not clear where it would move during construction (Gascoyne 2005). The grassroots group called “Friends of Downtown” (FOD) formed in response to the city’s intention of building a parking structure on MPL1, launched a referendum against evening hours for parking meters to block funding for the project (King 2010). FOD’s platform included maligning the automobile, raising fears of the market’s being “killed,” and heralding “the end of downtown” (Kidd 2010). The referendum passed, causing the City to relinquish their plans to build a parking structure.

One year later, the City hired consulting firm Nelson Nygard to conduct a study and a Downtown Access Planning (DAP) meeting or workshop (“charette”) to investigate city parking concerns (Klein 2006). This new study found that, contrary to the previous study, Chico had not reached sufficient capacity to justify the construction of a
parking structure and that any measures to construct additional parking could wait up to 24 years until demand reaches 85 percent of capacity (Nelson Nygard Consulting 2006). The charette noted a strong polarization in attitudes about building new parking structures, with 33 percent strongly in favor and 33 percent strongly against. The DAP recommended a tiered pricing plan that would lure downtown employees to cheaper parking in metered lots, leaving street spaces for customers.

During 2007 and 2008, City staff and the DCBA turned their attention from parking structures to the “walkability” of downtown, assuming that an improved pedestrian experience would encourage people to park further away from their destination. The City, to this day, emphasizes it is not planning to build more parking structures. Current maps in the Downtown Element of the City’s new General Plan, adopted in 2011, show two new ones to be built by CSU, Chico, but not on MPL1 (City of Chico 2011). CSU, Chico is currently constructing the Normal Street parking structure on Second Street, between Normal Avenue and Chestnut Street (California State University, Chico [CSU, Chico] 2011).

In June 2009, in anticipation of the annual franchise renewal, a City Council member raised market safety and parking concerns at an Internal Affairs Committee (IAC) meeting (City of Chico Internal Affairs Committee 2009). These concerns immediately reopened discussion about market relocation. Just as quickly tempers ran high, witnessed by standing room only attendance at subsequent IAC meetings and partisan “letters to the editor” in newspapers. The CCFM’s location was again a hot topic. One writer asked for “all this bickering (to) stop” (Febbo 2009). According to City Council
member Andy Holcombe, anti-parking structure activists continued to see their role as adversarial and to use the parking structure as a scare tactic whenever discussions about the CCFM are held at the city level, using it as a “bully point” (Holcombe 2010).

Origin of this Research

In August 2009, CSU, Chico Professor LaDona Knigge approached the City, offering her Planning for Sustainable Communities class to undertake a student service-learning project to study parking and safety issues. The City accepted her offer. In a joint meeting of the City and CSU, Chico representatives after the study was completed, Councilman Holcombe noted that the university was seen as an impartial third party (Holcombe 2010), an advantage in a complex political and public controversy. Throughout this CSU, Chico-City of Chico collaboration, I attended several Internal Affairs Committee meetings, a Chico Grange membership meeting, and a conference on Community-based Collaborative Research in Berkeley, California, learning about key issues and actors as part of my research.

Over the fall semester of 2009, Professor Knigge’s Geography class and a Recreation Department class taught by Professor Richard Gitelson surveyed CCFM customers and vendors (CSU, Chico 2010). A study of downtown merchants was beyond the scope of the student-led, service-learning project, and this bilateral approach neglected some major stakeholders. To date, there had been no methodical attempt to obtain viewpoints from downtown merchants, though their objections to the CCFM’s location had been voiced at City meetings and aired in the press. Some attributed the source of merchant objections to tenants of the Garden Walk Mall, neighboring the market (Urseny
2009). Other sources, like the “Save the Market” flyer handed to me one autumn morning in 2009, identified the greater downtown business community as threatening the CCFM. As Professor Knigge’s graduate student, this gap provided me with an interesting thesis study and topic, and I was well-placed to investigate DCBA member attitudes. As a participant in the CSU, Chico study, I helped analyze and format data gathered by both classes. I refer to this data as the CSU, Chico CCFM study (Knigge and Gitelson 2009).
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This study includes a survey questionnaire and GIS. I developed a participant favorability index from survey questionnaire results to plot on a map using GIS. Qualitative research methods and data used include semi-structured interviews of DCBA members and other key informants, and participant observation and informal interviews at other farmers’ markets. I use coding to analyze qualitative data from interviews of DCBA members.

I surveyed downtown merchants using a survey questionnaire on SurveyMonkey™, an online tool for conducting surveys. The survey questionnaire was sent to members of the DCBA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with merchants who asked to participate or were referred by others. Interviews were transcribed, providing text for analysis. Field notes were compiled during public meetings, travel, and attendance at other markets, and during my leisure time. I also interviewed some non-members of the DCBA, including representatives of the City, the CCFM, and the public. Local newspaper archives were examined for past and present references to merchant concerns about the farmers’ market. My notes, articles found, and transcripts of non-DCBA members were used to flesh out the context and development of these issues. I examined data on CCFM customer travel and shopping habits from the CSU, Chico CCFM study. Distributed meeting agendas and minutes provided additional information.
Study Design

According to Creswell (2009), a case study is an intensive methodical examination of one process or event. Using mixed methods for data collection and analysis allows triangulation of data, preserving research integrity, supporting validity, and substantiating any claims made (Hay 2000), therefore giving a broader and more nuanced picture of a process or event than can quantitative or qualitative data alone. An empirical survey questionnaire of downtown business owners included closed questions where respondents could select only one item on a five-point numerical Likert rating scale. My research continued with semi-structured interviews of key informants using broadly worded questions that gave respondents the opportunity to respond in their own words without restrictions and produced qualitative data.

Qualitative research methods have been adopted from the social sciences for humanistic geographic study (Hay 2000). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), analyzing qualitative data text in a rigorous way is complex, but this rigor is necessary to maintain objectivity. Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology of analysis used to derive meaning from text data. Grounded theory is used to identify themes from social data through an iterative process (Knigge and Cope 2006). I used grounded theory and thematic coding to analyze text data and develop concepts. I grouped concepts to classify them, established categories, and examined relationships between these categories and subcategories to learn participants’ perceptions and attitudes, and obtain informed conclusions.
I used several secondary sources, including local archives and materials published by the City, the DCBA, and the CCFM, in print or on websites. An additional source used was the CSU, Chico CCFM study.

Online Survey Questionnaire

I developed and administered an online survey questionnaire of downtown merchants using SurveyMonkey™ via the Internet over five days in December 2009 (12/2/09 through 12/7/09). I used the DCBA’s email member list to do this. All businesses located within the boundaries of the DCBA Assessment district are members of the DCBA.

The advantages of using an online survey questionnaire include (1) respondents can take the survey questionnaire at their convenience; (2) it’s easier to ask about sensitive subjects than a survey questionnaire administered in person; (3) they are inexpensive, fast, and easy to administer; (4) and for participant response, ease of tracking results and the use of optional features such as skip logic for question order. Drawbacks of using online surveys are user concerns about spam and privacy, technical barriers, and the inability for respondents to ask the researcher questions (SurveyMonkey™ 2011) (Appendix B).

The survey questionnaire consisted of twelve questions about doing business in downtown Chico. Three were closed questions, six were open-ended and four were closed but allowed an open-ended text response. In designing the survey questionnaire on SurveyMonkey™, I allowed respondents to move forward and back through survey pages. Three of the questions specifically asked about the Saturday morning market. The
survey did not ask whether the CCFM should be moved. Respondents were required to disclose the location of their business for GIS analysis, but could choose not to disclose contact information.

Administration and Data Collection

The internet survey was introduced and disseminated through the DCBA’s “Constant Contact” software containing their member database. Four emails, headlined “DT Business Owners Asked to Weigh-In,” were emailed to DCBA members. To avoid perceptions of bias by the DCBA, emails were noted “As a courtesy to a CSU, Chico graduate student.” The first email, sent December 1, introduced the survey. The second email, containing an embedded survey link hosted on SurveyMonkey™, was sent on December 2 at 10:00 a.m (see Appendix A). This email informed members the link would be “live” from noon on December 2 to noon on December 7. Two reminder emails were sent before the portal was closed.

Successful administration and effective response rates of internet surveys can depend on many factors (University of Texas 2011). According to the DCBA, out of 446 members, 60 do not have email addresses. I used the 386 DCBA members with email for my list-based sampling frame, meaning that the sample included every member of the population to be surveyed. Out of these 386 potential respondents, 363 emails were successfully delivered, while 23 were not. Reasons for email non-delivery could include outdated member addresses or technological difficulties. Out of 363 emails delivered, 84 responses were initiated. The remaining 279 successful deliveries without responses were counted as “non-interviews.” Non-response could be due to explicit or implicit refusal to
take the survey. I was not told about any explicit refusals to take the survey. Other causes for non-response could be a language barrier, or temporal factors (e.g., the participant was unavailable during the survey period, or completed the survey questionnaire but did not submit it while the portal was open). If the respondent included a business address, regardless of whether he or she responded to each question segment, I included that response in my dataset. Because I gave participants the ability to backtrack or fast forward through the survey, there was an equal probability of participants skipping any question. Reasons for not responding to any one question could be that they meant their answer to be a zero, they didn’t have an opinion about that question, or they didn’t understand it. Business location was necessary for me to map responses and analyze the proximity-favorability relationship. Out of 84 responses initiated, 70 responses included addresses and the remaining 14 responses did not. My data set contains the 70 completed surveys.

Responses were exported to an Excel spreadsheet from SurveyMonkey™. Internet survey response rates are calculated differently than other survey methods for several reasons. According to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) (2011), internet surveys allow for “unrestricted self-selection by survey participants,” similar to mailed surveys. Respondents may answer or skip certain questions, starting and stopping when they like. Using AAPOR’s formula for calculating a
response rate to internet surveys, where a list-based sample frame is used, my response rate is 21.8 percent.¹

Data Analysis Procedures for Online Survey Questionnaire

Qualitative data from my survey questionnaire was analyzed as follows: answers to open-ended questions were coded and coded instances were tallied (Appendix C).

My survey questionnaire also produced ordinal rating-scale data, in responses to closed-end questions where respondents could pick only one answer. Questions 5 and 10 were Likert rating scale questions offering response choices with numeric and text values from 1 to 5 (Appendix B). Using a rating scale allowed me to use the ranking as the code. This enabled coding and quantitative analysis of statement responses (Newing 2010). The geographic use of ordinal data as interval data is debated, as there is no way to quantify intervals between each response. However, it has been shown that a higher ranking can be indicative of a stronger feeling, and, according to Montello and Sutton (2006), “rating-scale data have been treated as interval level by thousands of published studies by top researchers” (89).

¹ Whether this is an adequate response to eliminate bias is contested. Historically, higher response rates were assumed to reflect a more accurate representation of population views. However, according to the American Association for Public Opinion Research, responses to surveys by all methods have declined, with the result that “the relationship between response rates and survey quality has become much less clear.” Further, AAPOR reports that “results that show the least bias have turned out, in some cases, to come from surveys with less than optimal response rates. Experimental comparisons have also revealed few significant differences between estimates from surveys with low response rates and short field periods and surveys with high response rates and long field periods” (AAPOR 2011).
Accordingly, I derived a numeric favorability index from participant responses to the two five-point Likert scale questions, questions 5 and 10. This favorability index measured the favorability of each respondent towards the farmers’ market. Question 5 asked, “What aspects of doing business in Chico’s downtown do you value?” Under “Saturday Morning Farmers’ Market,” participants could choose from 1 (low) to 5 (necessary). This is a general question designed to measure the value of the Saturday morning CCFM. Question 10 asked about specific impacts of the Saturday morning CCFM. This four-part question asked merchants if they are impacted by the market in the areas of sales, foot traffic, parking and competition. Again, a Likert scale was used and participants were asked to choose from 1 (strong negative effect) to 5 (strong positive effect).

I added responses to questions 5 and 10 for an index of favorability for each respondent. A higher value indicates a more positive response to the CCFM. Possible indexes ranged from 0 as the lowest to 25 as the highest values. Actual favorability indexes ranged from 2 to 22 because some respondents did not complete each part of each question. Indexes were linked with respondent addresses and included in the GIS database discussed below. Question 10 also allowed entry and ranking of an optional parameter (other). These open-ended text responses were not included in the numeric index and will be discussed apart from the ranking in the Findings section.

Survey questionnaire data was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Variables included answers to all survey questions including type of business, length of time in business, whether business is open on Saturdays,
and travel mode used to access the market. I also included my favorability index as a variable, after consulting with David Philhour of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences Statistics Lab.

I used GIS and cartography techniques to (1) plot participants on a map, (2) determine participant distance from the CCFM, and (3) visually display participant favorability toward the market, followed by a return to statistical analysis to find any relationship between participant proximity to the CCFM and the favorability index.

**GIS and DCBA Respondent Address**

The survey questionnaire required that respondents disclose their business address. Addresses were used to test for possible relationship between merchant proximity to and attitude about the CCFM, as expressed in a derived favorability index discussed above, and to map spatial relationships between respondents and CCFM location.

I used ESRI ArcMap 9.3.1 to map survey responses as follows.

1. Geocoded member addresses from a DCBA database and placed on a base map provided by the City. This gave a point location for each business based on their mailing address.

2. Assigned x and y coordinates to addresses, converting them into points.

3. Used a layer provided by the City’s Engineering Department with municipal parking lots, highlighting MPL1.

4. Found the center point of the MPL1 polygon.

5. Used Analysis Tools\Proximity\Point Distance to derive distances between address points and center point of parking lot. This created a table of distances.
6. Performed a join to add distances to the table of geocoded addresses.

7. Sorted main data file of responses to my DCBA survey by name of business. Using Windows brought up a table of Point Distance Events and main data file. Inserted a “distance” column into main data file. With both files on a monitor, I manually entered distances into the main data file, reading from the GIS table, using a 10-key pad.

8. If business names had changed, I filled in blanks by cross-referencing the GIS file by address. This provided a list of participants by distance from the central point of MPL1.

9. Adjusted distances to MPL1 for businesses in the Garden Walk Mall (GWM). This building spans the width of a block, with a back entrance directly across the street from the CCFM. My knowledge of this area led me to believe that using a mailing address to pinpoint the GWM businesses would be misleading. The space of contention is in the back of the building and not on Main Street where mail is received. I assigned a unique distance of 225’ for all GWM businesses. I used the measuring tool in Google Earth to gauge distance from the farmers’ market side of the GWM to the MPL1 center point.

The favorability indexes I derived from survey responses were included in the GIS database. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between distance from market and favorability index. Using GIS participant locations were mapped using dot symbols indicating degree of favorability. A diverging color ramp, with red indicating low favorability, to green indicating high favorability, was used to symbolize the favorability index.
Difficulties and Limitations

Difficulties in data collection through this survey were as follows. In administering the online survey questionnaire, I was concerned about keeping data collection fair and valid because of strong feelings in the community about the conflict. Monitoring the dissemination software, DCBA’s Executive Director, Katrina Davis-Woodcox, noticed that survey recipients were forwarding it to multiple unknown IP addresses (Davis-Woodcox 2009). To ensure that I got one response from each business, I monitored responses. We had two responses from one IP address, but it was an admissible occurrence.

Another limitation was that, as with all surveys where the researcher is not present, I had no way of controlling who completed the survey questionnaire. The participant could be either the business owner or an employee who had access to the business email account. In addition, I believe that at least one respondent read the Likert scale backwards because her responses were in opposition to what she told me about her perceptions.

Semi-structured Interviews

Downtown merchants and stakeholders who asked to be interviewed, or were recommended by others, were interviewed in person. I conducted seven interviews of DCBA members. I conducted eight interviews of key informants who were not DCBA members. These semi-structured interviews were meant to learn participants’ positions and views. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses prompts to encourage the flow of information, instead of asking predetermined questions. Prepared questions could restrict conversation about the rich relationships involved, while hampering creativity and
interpersonal cues. In order to avoid this constraint, I prepared two prompts: Who is responsible for a vision for downtown Chico, and What, if anything, is special about the space called MPL1, in and of itself?

Administration and Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was used to select interviewees. A snowball technique is used when your population is restricted to interest around one issue, and you rely on an initial interviewee to give names of who to interview next (Longhurst 2003). My initial contact in the snowball process was Jim Rucker, City Assistant Manager, whom I met while conducting research for the CSU, Chico CCFM study (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). During the interview Mr. Rucker made three suggestions of who to contact next, and my interview network grew from there. I contacted recommended prospective interviewees to set appointments. Some wanted to meet at their office, while some asked to meet in a public place. Everybody I asked to participate agreed to do so. During interviews, some talked freely with little prompting, while some waited for me to prompt them. In addition to DCBA members, I interviewed two representatives of the CCFM, three agents for the City, and three market supporters, members of FOD. I took notes using longhand during interviews to record participant comments and then transcribed the notes into field notes using Microsoft Word.

Data Analysis Procedure for Interviews

Interview transcripts of DCBA members were coded and analyzed, using grounded theory. Interview transcripts of non-DCBA members, field notes from visits to comparative markets, notes from meetings attended, and newspaper articles were not
coded, but were used to provide background information and richness to my interpretation.

My first task was to analyze transcripts of interviews with DCBA members. Deriving meaning from qualitative data is complex because, unlike quantitative data, data cannot be collapsed into predetermined response categories. I printed these transcripts, then examined them line by line and developed codes for the data. I made note of these codes by hand in margins, then used Excel to create a code book. Using “axial coding,” I created a hierarchy of codes, where codes are subsumed under other codes. Axial coding is a method of breaking text into segments, then reconfiguring these pieces to discover concepts and relationships between them (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Through reading and rereading my coded data, I created seven categories in which I organized the data: characterizations, consequences, philosophy, policy, politics, relationships and solutions. This allowed me to develop subcategories of each category. For example, the category “relationships” contained subcategories “between DCBA and the City of Chico” and “between DCBA and the CCFM.” My hierarchy of codes transformed over time through an iterative comparison process. In this process, findings reflexively affect categories. Using iteration in this way can create order in the data and provide meaning from the text (Cope 2000).

Difficulties and Limitations

Interview sites were chosen by participants. These venues often included interruptions by business being conducted, my being hampered by inadequate writing
surfaces, or the distraction of background noise. I found that relying on handwritten notes was a limitation. If I repeated this research, I would use a recording device.

**Participant Observation at Other Farmers’ Markets**

I visited six other farmers’ markets in California and Oregon. At these markets I noted market attributes including location, configuration, products offered, and amenities (Appendix D). When possible, I asked market representatives about market history, possible conflict with neighboring businesses, and resultant solutions.

**Secondary Data Sources**

Secondary data can provide background and context for a research topic. In the course of this research, I used the following secondary data sources: local newspaper archives, official records of public meetings, materials published by the City, the DCBA, the CCFM and other farmers’ markets, and the CSU, Chico student-led study of CCFM vendors and customers. These materials provided rich, contextual, and historical data about the issues surrounding the history of the CCFM and its relationships with the City and the DCBA, and helped to justify my research as discussed below.

Chico has two newspapers, the daily *Enterprise-Record (ER)*, and the weekly *Chico News & Review (CNR)*, which were searched during the time period of February to August 2010. To locate articles in both newspapers, I used the search terms “farmers’ market” and “parking.” I searched the ER archives on their website index, which included articles from 1998 to 2009. No articles came up from 1998 through 2002. 2003 contained one article, 2004 contained three. The parking structure controversy previously
mentioned was a hot topic in 2005, generating many articles. Articles dwindled in 2006 and 2007. I read articles using a microfiche reader. Some microfiche cassettes were damaged and would not load or display. I used the CNR website to search for articles in that newspaper. Free full text articles since 3/15/01 were available. These secondary sources were analyzed as outlined above.

I did not include every instance that mentioned the farmers’ market in my research. ER postings on Daily Buzz, the Calendar, and frequent guest columns such as “Sow There,” that mention the farmers’ market, were eliminated. CCFM publicity articles about “First Five” school groups, Tomato and Berry Days, recipes, and vendor profiles were also eliminated. I omitted Daily Planner entries in the CNR.

Materials from the City included parking studies, Internal Affairs Committee meeting minutes, and planning documents. The DCBA provided me with a previous study of members about market location and organization brochures. I had data from the CSU, Chico CCFM study. I did not code secondary materials, though I used them in my analysis and discussion.

Summary of Methodology

This chapter outlines mixed research methods of data collection and analysis used in this study. Quantitative and qualitative data was generated by responses to my survey questionnaire of DCBA members. Qualitative data resulted from survey questionnaire text answers and merchant interviews. Interview transcripts and social artifacts including meeting minutes, newspaper articles, and publications from the City and the
DCBA were coded and recoded in an iterative manner. This process of recursive content analysis explained merchant attitudes.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Survey Findings

I conducted a survey questionnaire of DCBA members to discover and describe their personal and professional attitudes about the CCFM’s tenancy in MPL1 on Saturday mornings. I was interested if they believe the market is good for the City and local business, as the City itself believes, or if they see it as disruptive. I wanted to find out how downtown merchants view the roles and actions of city officials, market vendors, the public, and interest groups. I was also interested in what differences and similarities in philosophy, definitions, or motivations could be found among respondents. I was curious about whether merchant attitudes about the market could be correlated to their distance from the market. Finally, I was curious about what solutions merchants might propose. My low survey response rate of 21.8 percent, 84 out of 363 delivered, indicates participating in this survey was not a priority for most merchants (Figure 2).

My survey contained closed and open-ended questions. I begin by addressing closed-end questions. Questions in my survey asked about personal and professional perceptions of the market and general aspects of doing business in downtown Chico. When asked whether respondents personally attend the Saturday morning market, 85 percent said that they do attend the market. Most questions asked about respondents’
perceptions of conducting business in downtown Chico. Two questions asked if their business is open on Saturday mornings and, if so, at what time. Fifty-nine percent said their business is open on Saturdays, and all of those were open during some farmers’ market hours. Other questions asked about merchant travel and parking behavior. A majority of respondents (80 percent) drive to work, while about one-third (35 percent) live within two miles of work. Alternative travel mode share was 9 percent walk, 10 percent bicycle, and 1 percent other. No DCBA members surveyed used the bus as their primary commute method, though one said he takes the bus if he doesn’t walk.

Two questions explicitly asked about the CCFM: questions 5 and 10. Question 5 asked, “What aspects of doing business in Chico’s downtown do you value?” followed by a list of items to rate on a Likert scale (as shown below). Answers were ranked based upon the combined percentage of responses rated as “important” or “necessary.” Of the choices offered, “walkability” was the most valued, with 77 percent of participants

\[ \text{Figure 2. Diagram of response rates.} \]
choosing “important” to “necessary” (Table 1). The aspects “# of customers” and “parking” were highly ranked as well, with 65 percent and 61 percent, respectively, choosing “important” to “necessary.” “Bus access” was least valued, with 57 percent of participants choosing “low” to “moderately low.” Fifty percent of participants gave a “low to moderately low” value to the Thursday Market. Forty-three percent placed the Saturday farmers’ market in the same category.

Table 1. Values of Aspects of Doing Business Downtown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderately low</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walkability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s downtown!</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of customers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to university</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown activities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCBA promotions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ market - Saturday</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic buildings</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ market - Thursday</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus access</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3 is a histogram created from ranked answers to the portion of question 5 that asks whether the CCFM Saturday Market is valued as a part of doing business downtown. This diagram shows that most participants find the market moderately important as part of doing business in downtown Chico. However, there is a clear outlying spike of participants who place a low value on the CCFM’s presence downtown.

![Histogram of Saturday Market Value](image)

**Figure 3.** Respondents value Saturday market.

Question 10 asked about impacts from the Saturday morning farmers’ market. About parking impacts, 35 percent of participants cited “moderate negative effects” and “strong negative effects” (Table 2). About foot traffic impacts, 28 percent cited
Table 2. Areas Impacted by CCFM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Strong negative</th>
<th>Moderate negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moderate positive</th>
<th>Strong positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot traffic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“moderate positive effects” to “strong positive effects.” Participants were evenly split about the impact of the market on sales: 19 percent indicating “moderate negative effects” to “strong negative effects” and 19 percent indicating “moderate positive effects” to “strong positive effects.” The majority of participants, 58 percent to 90 percent, rated the impact of the Saturday morning market as “neutral effect” in all areas questioned.

By combining survey questionnaire responses from questions 5 and 10, I derived a favorability index, as discussed in Chapter 4. Responses were color coded by degree of favorability and plotted on a map. The only variables determined to be in relationship were favorability index and proximity to the CCFM. When plotted on a graph, favorability and distance from the market (Figure 4) do show a positive relationship, but it is very weak. With an R2 value of .132, it cannot be claimed that favorability increases as distance from market increases. However, again we see a cluster of very low favorability scores closest to the market.

Using GIS, I mapped this favorability index on a map of downtown Chico. The map shows a cluster of businesses closest to the farmers’ market with low...
favorability (Figure 5). Respondents with the lowest favorability scores are within one block of the market.

Twenty-four people entered text answers when asked, “What else do you value about doing business downtown?” (question 5, Appendix B). Responses focused on the cultural, historic, and aesthetic aspects of downtown, diversity and vitality, and the friendliness of Chico’s people. When asked specifically about business impacts from the Saturday morning market (question 10, Appendix B), nineteen people provided comments. One participant had a temporal outlook, saying “Since the market has been
DCBA Member Favorability Towards the CCFM

Figure 5. DCBA member favorability towards the CCFM. Source: Adapted from Knigge, LaDonna and Steve Verbrugge. 2009. Chico Certified Farmers’ Market Study. Unpublished work. Department of Geography, California State University, Chico. Used with permission.

operating at the public lot since 1993, [the] negative impact is difficult to measure.”

Another said, “Love the market and love the sales that I receive from people who religiously go to the market and then come shopping!” A third said, “There is a strong negative effect until around noon when some parking opens up.” Four merchants resented farmers’ market customers using their bathrooms instead of outdoor portable toilets. Four said parking is a problem during the market. Two participants said they don’t open on Saturday because of the farmers’ market. Four said the market is advantageous to their business.
The final survey questionnaire question asked, “Is there anything you would like to add?” (question 14, Appendix B). Thirty-nine people entered text answers for this question. Answers to this open-ended question ranged from positive (“The Saturday Market is a valuable retail draw to downtown,” “I strongly believe that if there was not a farmers’ mkt [sic] available on Sat. then the downtown businesses will suffer”) to negative (“I would love to see the management of CCFM take the merchants into consideration and move”). Several comments voiced strong personal approval of the market, while deploring its current location and harmful impact on business, such as “The farmers’ market is a good event in the wrong location,” and “We love the farmers’ market Saturday, but would be just as happy to have it in another location.” In this vein, I found one comment very poignant, as a response to the “Save the Market” campaign: “I do not wish for CCFM to go out of business. I am concerned that they are covering parking spots that could be used by my customers.”

Sixteen participants discussed parking, eleven saying it is a problem and two saying it is not a problem. Three participants were critical of the City downtown parking policies, such as “The problem is not the farmers mkt [sic] on Saturdays it is that parking is free, allow[ing] employees and [business] owners to park on the street thus wiping our parking for the customers.” Though I purposely did not ask about moving the market, comments show it was on participants’ minds. Eleven said the market should be moved while five said it should not. Seven people suggested alternate locations. Of those, five advocated for the lot behind City Hall, one suggested closing 2nd Street between Main and Broadway, and one mentioned Lot 5 at 1st and Wall streets, bordering Big Chico
Creek. Four people referred to the farmers’ market as a “destination,” saying that it would enjoy patronage no matter where it’s located. Two participants said they were happy to be given an outlet. Only one participant mentioned safety concerns in relation to the farmers’ market.

I identified trends under hierarchical codes (see Appendix C). For instance, under the code “possible solutions,” there were twelve suggestions that the market should move, with eleven mentioning preferred locations. One participant disagreed, saying the market is “working well where it is.” Two participants referred to the solution as obvious, saying it is “right in front of them” and “easy, the stroke of a pen” [would take care of it]. Two mentions characterized the CCFM as moveable, saying “it would not lose a single customer.” All comments about the FOD were negative, except for those made by the one DCBA board member who also belongs to the FOD. FOD’s “Save the Market” campaign was criticized as being motivated by “a personal agenda unrelated to the farmers’ market.” One comment dismissed them, saying “If they were businesses they’d feel differently.”

Some comments addressed merchants’ relationship with the City: “Down town merchants make Chico a unique place to visit by offering very unique products and services. They deserve better support from the city,” and “Businesses downtown are affected [by lack of parking] and feel our city does not support them in this manner.”

Some participants addressed the relationship between CCFM and the City. Some think the market enjoys undue influence with the city. One participant noted, “I support local farmers, love the market and believe it is a benefit to Downtown, but do not
believe it deserves the special treatment and consideration it is currently demanding and receiving.” Quite a few merchants said the market has an unfair advantage because it doesn’t “pay taxes and market rents,” and [their] “vendors compete directly with downtown merchants.” Some understand the market benefits of belonging to the DCBA: “The CCFM knows that being located downtown is important to their success.”

When discussing the Saturday market itself, some participants saw the market as being unreasonable (“I continue to hope the Farmers Market will see that they can succeed and allow downtown merchants to do the same”), while some distinguished between farmers/vendors and market organizers (“If we can get the CCFM management to bend, just a little, we can all have a better and brighter downtown”).

Interview Findings

I conducted personal interviews of seven DCBA members. I transcribed all interviews, coded the qualitative data, and categorized the codes. By placing codes in a hierarchy, then categorizing them, I was able to explore participants’ perceptions and identify repeated themes and stories. I interviewed three members who are serving on the DCBA’s Board of Directors, three who were not, and one former board member. All are seasoned business people and spoke knowledgeably about retailing in downtown Chico. Both board and non-board members expressed themselves forcefully. Responses were highly polarized between board and non-board members (Table 3), but all but one were critical of CCFM impacts on the availability of parking on Saturday mornings and think the market should move to an alternate downtown location.
Table 3. Example of Polarization of Views, by Characterization and CCFM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCFM characterization</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an institution</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has intrinsic value</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just doing business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moveable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success due to knowledge of economy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative travel modes not used</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detrimental to downtown</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t pay sales tax</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has changed for worse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its business practices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its vendors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes no sense why won’t move</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs more confidence in their product</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not tax exempt organization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not adhering to contracts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not looking at options</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In analyzing my interviews with these seven people, several concepts became clear. Board members showed attitudes such as pride, complacency, and scorn towards non-business people and rank and file DCBA members. Non-board members indicated they felt, among other things, ignored, misrepresented, and misunderstood by the Board, the City, the public, and the CCFM. To measure the general tenor of responses, I coded words and phrases used as positive, negative, or neutral. Coded responses were largely negative. Negative mentions included accusations, criticisms, and expressions of doubt, fear, anger, and anxiety. Positive mentions included approval, fairness, agreement, and generosity. Out of 310 responses among the seven people interviewed, I found 190 to be negative, 63 neutral, and 57 positive. This is perhaps not surprising, given that our main topic was a conflict.

In my analysis I discovered a stark contrast between DCBA board and non-board members. Board members talked knowledgeably and at length about parking theory in general, and the City’s present and future parking policies and regulations. They said the “parking problem” may be a matter of public misperception. All mentioned long-range plans and impacts of City parking policy on the downtown business district. Two voiced impatience with the Council’s vulnerability to public pressure. All discussed the role of the university and students in the City’s economy and dynamics. Two said that if the market moves, it “won’t lose a single customer” and one said “they need to have more confidence in their product.” Regarding MPL1, one interviewee said, “The parking lot is a parking lot. The fact that the farmers’ market has been there for years gives it an overlay of community space.” One board member voiced doubt about the City’s
alternative travel mode emphasis and said, “People are stuck in their cars.” One described the City’s free bus pass program for students and downtown employees as “the best kept secret in Chico.” One participant dismissed the CCFM saying, “Farmers’ markets are cute and fun but they’re not money makers.”

Three DCBA merchants interviewed were not on the Board of Directors and were anxious to tell “their side of the story.” All had previously owned successful businesses in other locations, and all were critical of the City’s reluctance to move the market. They think they are being left out of the equation and unfairly villainized by all other parties involved. They see the City as neglecting their interests, while favoring the farmers’ market, and expressed puzzlement as to why. One said, “I want to feel someone cares my business thrives, is responsive to merchants.” Several related being accosted by market supporters at their business or in public places.

Other contentious topics mentioned by respondents were providing market customers with access to rest rooms and whether CCFM customers negatively impact business. Three merchants in the Garden Walk Mall across the street from the market reported a reluctance to allow farmers’ market customers to use their facilities. Tom Hall, mall owner, said the rest rooms are repeatedly trashed, even vandalized, on Saturday mornings. Four merchants said they have been told by their customers they will not venture downtown on Saturdays due to congestion and lack of parking. I was told that some businesses don’t open on Saturdays for this reason. None of the non-board members mentioned students, the university, or long-term policies or processes, except to say that Chico’s downtown still needs a parking structure.
The data showed a polarization of views in several areas between board and non-board members (Table 3). Table 3 shows that, for the category “characterization” and the subcategory “CCFM,” twenty-three out of thirty-one mentions were negative. Nineteen of those negative responses (83 percent) were made by non-board members. While positive comments about the DCBA were largely from board members, criticism of the DCBA and references to dissent in the ranks came from the three non-board members. One non-board member described himself and other DCBA members as “an involuntary association of disgruntled taxpayers” who aren’t receiving fair representation.

When mentioning the relationship between the DCBA and the City, out of a total of thirteen comments, all comments by non-board members were negative, while most comments by board members were positive. Board members prided themselves on having access to City Council members and staff, describing the relationship as good, pleasing, or a partnership. Non-board members described themselves as being “at the City’s mercy” and “wanting to be heard.”

No board members mentioned the relationship between the CCFM and the City, but non-board members were critical, referring to the unfairness of the CCFM’s “undue influence” over the City and perceived favoritism.

When talking about the CCFM, both board members and non-board members had positive things to say about the market concerning the amount of foot traffic it brings downtown. Board members, while acknowledging that parking is still a problem on Saturday mornings, describe themselves as having “moved on” from the conflict. By the time of the survey questionnaire, they said they had “made friends with the CCFM” and
“surprised them with their support.” Board members refer to themselves as being willing to “share their knowledge about doing business downtown” with the CCFM.

But the conflict, as discussed in these interviews, is more immediate for non-board members. Several related being accosted and threatened by CCFM supporters at their place of business or in public spaces. The inconvenience of CCFM customers using merchant bathrooms, leaving a mess, and vandalizing them was also a point of contention. Negative comments about the CCFM were overwhelmingly made by non-board members. The two main threads of criticism concerned customers and finances. Non-board members repeatedly stated that CCFM customers are “not their clientele,” that they “mill around” and “walk-ins don’t buy.” These merchants say their customers complain about parking and don’t come downtown on Saturdays. They fear that their customers will abandon shopping downtown and patronize businesses with ample parking outside of downtown instead. They also believe the City is missing out on sales tax-based revenue because monies spent at the market don’t get returned to the City in the same proportion that merchant taxes do.

One participant, who wants the farmers’ market to move, sees the conflict as not being about the CCFM itself, but rather its proximity to downtown businesses. This participant said that this conflict would occur with any group of businesses competing with one another for parking.

Analysis of Findings

My survey shows that the majority of DCBA members surveyed appreciate the market on a personal level. But they do not place a high value on the CCFM as a part
of doing business in downtown Chico. They perceive other aspects of downtown as more valuable, including its “walkability,” parking availability, culture and activities, and foot traffic. The majority of DCBA members surveyed said that the CCFM had a neutral effect on their business in key areas, with a moderate positive skew for foot traffic impacts and a substantial negative skew for parking impacts. Text answers show polarization, from strong positive impacts in marketing to strong negative impacts in parking and rest room availability. Locational analysis determined that there is a cluster, or hot spot, of “least favorable” respondents within a one block radius of the market. While I did not ask about solutions on the survey or in the interviews, many ideas were offered and all involved moving the market. In text answers to open-ended questions, eleven out of sixteen mentions advocated moving the market.

Interviews with seven members of the DCBA about their perceptions of this conflict elicited stronger responses than the survey. I believe this is because of my sampling techniques which favored participants with strong opinions. In my interviews of DCBA merchants, I discovered two distinct and polarized views about the market. Six out of seven respondents believe the market can and should be moved. While three remain adamantly pro-move, the other four have accepted the market’s tenancy in MPL1 and have changed their focus to other DCBA and parking issues. This polarization leads me to believe that the views of all members are not being equally represented by the DCBA board.

I was intrigued by a contrasting use of the word “destination.” Several survey participants and interviewees identified the market as a “destination,” saying that if the
market were to move, CCFM customers would follow it to any location. This usage emphasizes the market as an objective, which would be found by seeking. This disagrees with the CCFM’s assertion that it is a “drive by” attraction and, therefore, not moveable. (In an open-text survey questionnaire comment, one merchant described his business as a “destination location,” which would seem to agree with this first definition.) A second reoccurring use of the word “destination” mirrors a 2007 statement by Katrina Davis-Woodcox identifying the goal of the DCBA to “make downtown the ultimate destination for our region” (Levin 2007). This usage emphasizes size and gravity, referring to the downtown’s ability, as a higher order center, to pull customers from outlying areas.

Another item of interest was what I call “the educated voice” of some participants. These were people who easily employed geographic terminology like “sense of place,” and “urban and transportation planning,” possibly reflecting the demographic skew towards higher education attainment in Chico’s population.

The voices of all businesses should be included in the planning process so that proven benefits and sustainable economic development for most, can become benefits for all. This can be achieved through comprehensive participatory planning process, integrated marketing strategies, and possibly transportation measures.

I found that, in the debate about the Saturday market’s location, some stakeholders “jumped scales” in emphasis from the practical to the abstract (Ruddick 1996). Representatives of the City and public interest groups had long-term outlooks, framing the conflict in broad and philosophical concepts. For example, a DCBA board member who also belongs to the FOD rhetorically asked, “What is the best use of land?
Is the auto king?” In contrast, DCBA merchants grapple with immediate and proximal concerns about parking and sales.

Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between two variables, distance from market and favorability. There is a correlation between these two variables: as distance from market increases, favorability increases also (Figure 4).

Many merchants think that the farmers’ market would better serve the interests of all if it were moved to an alternate downtown location, and believe the market is so popular and well attended that it is a) moveable and b) will not suffer a resultant loss in sales if moved. Ideas about the optimal CCFM location vary, but merchants want MPL1 parking spaces available for their customers. Merchants did not propose moving the market outside of downtown, or even to the north side of downtown. In fact, alternate locations proposed by respondents were within one or two blocks of the current location. In the City’s 2003 parking study, consultants stated, “The majority of downtown users would park within 5 minutes . . . or two blocks of their destination” (Omni-Means 2003). If the market were moved a mere one or two blocks, its “parkshed” would remain somewhat contiguous with the current parking patterns, and downtown parking patterns on Saturday morning would be minimally altered. That leads me to believe that the focus area of contested space is the 78 parking spaces contiguous with the CCFM’s footprint.

In interviews and responses to my survey questionnaire, I found that DCBA members view the actions of the CCFM, the City, and public interest groups differently. Many merchants see the CCFM as unreasonable in not considering a modest relocation. The fact that the market hasn’t been moved after ten years of conflict leads them to
charge the City with favoring the market and ignoring merchant needs. DCBA member responses were split between positive and negative comments when referring to their relationship with the City. Responses were largely critical of the group FOD. Reasons given were FOD members issuing political threats to council members at City meetings and their false support of the farmers’ market as a cover for other political aims.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This case study investigated the controversy over the CCFM’s occupation of a municipal parking lot in downtown Chico on Saturday mornings.

Literature reviewed showed that farmers’ markets provide many economic, social, and environmental benefits for consumers, producers, and local economies, including employment creation, business survival, support for local services and suppliers, increased retention of income within the local community, and economic revitalization (Feenstra 1997; Jolly 2005; LaTrobe 2001; Lyson 1995; Tiemann 2004). Literature reviewed also showed negative impacts including congestion, competition, and parking (Bromley 2000; Cummings et al. 1998; Feenstra and Lewis 1999). This study has revealed that markets can face opposition from local merchants over competition and parking. As the number of farmers’ markets increases, site selection gains importance.

Examining the views of members of the DCBA through surveys, interviews, and research, I have identified themes that could be important for communities and planners engaged in market site analysis. We have seen that while downtown merchants may appreciate the market on a personal level, they can still have reservations about negative
impacts. Merchants closest to the market are the most impacted and should be included in site analysis before market placement and cooperative marketing after placement.

Possible Solutions

In order to address the question of how to ease a farmers’ market into a central business district, I recommend:

1. Listen to merchants’ concerns about competition and parking.

2. For economic concerns, market organizers should work with local businesses, in addition to city planners, from the outset to ensure the new arrangement is reasonably acceptable to all parties.

3. Markets and merchants can join forces in innovative cross-marketing strategies such as store displays, brochures, coupons, or “passports” that will present an attractive public image of a unified and cooperating downtown, thereby collaborating to create a higher order central place to attract custom from surrounding areas.

4. As in Millbrae, California, merchants could participate in market days, take advantage of increased foot traffic, and create opportunities for lingering and exposure (Millbrae 2010; PHP 2009).

5. Depending on the type of business, if weather and city sidewalk zoning allow, put tables and chairs outside.

6. Create attractants on sidewalks: sidewalk carts, outdoor sales racks, or displays.

7. CCFM management could co-create the DCBA’s concept of a Walkable
Downtown (Chamberlain 2008), emphasizing a downtown built for browsing rather than errands.

All downtown shoppers need access to rest rooms, and this can be an additional friction point between merchants and markets. While the CCFM places rented portable toilets on site on market days, some customers may prefer to use other facilities. There could be many reasons for this preference. Maybe it’s raining, or a customer has sanitation concerns, or may not want to stand in line, or needs space to accompany children, elderly or disabled, or has an aversion to portable toilets in general. John Kelsh, a principal of the city-branding consulting firm Great Destination Strategies, said that using a rest room is the number one reason people stop somewhere and also the number one reason they leave, if none is available (Kelsh 2011). An estimated two-thirds of CCFM customers shop and eat at neighboring businesses when they visit the market (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). Rest rooms need to be made available in the market’s vicinity to keep consumers downtown. If maintenance of rest rooms at neighboring businesses must be stepped up on that day, increased costs can be covered by the CCFM or by customers themselves. Organizers of the Berkeley farmers’ market arranged to have vendors and customers use facilities at an adjacent restaurant. The market pays for cleaning the restaurant’s bathrooms on that day. Another option would be for merchants to prominently display, next to rest room keys, collection jars for money donations towards cleaning, with signs explaining their need and purpose.

Whether there is a parking problem in downtown Chico is debated. Of Saturday market customers surveyed, 89 percent said they did not have a hard time finding
parking (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). A downtown business owner called parking “that sacred cow no elected official wants to take a stand on” (Montague 2007). A DCBA representative referred to “the real and perceived perception [that] parking downtown [is difficult]” (Klein 2006) (emphasis added). John Schallert, an expert in revitalization of small city central business districts said, “Parking is not the problem [for struggling businesses], the problem is your business is interchangeable with everyone else’s” (Schallert 2010). Some say that any parking problem is due to downtown employees and students taking up valuable parking spaces, especially on weekends when parking is free. When tiered parking prices are implemented, as recommended in the Downtown Access Plan, cost-conscious students and employees should shift to parking areas outside of high demand areas. Of course, employees leaving work at night need to park as close as possible to their workplace. But merchants still point to parking as a weak point, whether it’s a matter of public perception or not.

To reduce parking demand, one tactic could be to encourage more market customers to use alternative travel modes. An estimated 31 percent of CCFM customers use alternative travel modes on their trips to the market (Knigge and Gitelson 2009). This is a high alternative travel mode rate, higher than Butte County overall, so it is reasonable to expect that promoting an even higher number of farmers’ market customers to use alternative modes could be successful. People with green ideals tend to engage in sustainable travel behavior (Kahn and Morris 2009). The community would benefit overall from reduced single occupancy vehicle use while businesses profit from customers who are downtown and outside of their cars. Outside of cars, people are much more stimulated
and engaged, and, therefore, better shoppers. Walking a bike to a bike rack allows time to see window displays that would probably be missed driving by in a car on the way to a parking spot.

Market attendance has been estimated to be 3,000-5,000 (Givens 2010; Knigge and Gitelson 2009). If, as discussed above, 78 parking spaces need to be opened up on Saturday mornings, a 3 percent increase in alternative travel mode share would be needed. How to achieve this modest shift? CCFM management, the City, local businesses, and public groups could all play a role.

The CCFM could collaborate with local bike shops and riding organizations to offer workshops on carrying heavy, bulky, or large loads on bicycles. Teaching bicycle riders how and where to mount and use bags, baskets, or racks will help convert those who think they need a vehicle to haul goods home from the market. Using a trailer is another method of bike freight. Workshops could mainstream trailer use, if people are taught how to attach them to bicycles and pack them. Revised riding skills may be required if trailers affect bicycle handling and driving in city traffic. The CCFM could also promote customers walking to the market. Rolling market baskets, as used in Europe, could be sold, or information distributed about them. One blogger wrote, as she dreamed about a tall wheeled wicker basket, “Images filled my head of me and my environment-conscious style of marketing, gathering my fruit, vegetables, flowers and other farmers’ market goodies with European Flair!” (I Am A Domestic Goddess 2011).

Bus ridership levels in Chico could be improved. Saturday service is available on all local lines (2–9 and 15) and the downtown transit hub is two blocks from the
market. Brochures could be distributed at the market to encourage use of alternative travel modes and to destigmatize transit use. With partners like the FOD, Chico Velo, and the Chico Grange, the CCFM could build a positive community-wide coalition aimed at increasing customer use of bicycles, walking, ride sharing, and taking transit to shop on Saturday mornings.

The City could continue to work with local schools to implement a Safe Routes to Schools program. Mandated by the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act (U.S. Department of Transportation 2005), this program encourages families to use their bikes and to walk or take the bus. Chico can build on its acclaim received for being a bike-friendly city by continuing to promote alternate modes of transport by streamlining connectivity, ensuring that bike lanes and sidewalks are unbroken and smooth and facilities like bike racks are available at trip destinations.

Business owners could also free up parking spaces by using alternative travel modes more often, while modeling green travel behavior for their employees. While 20 percent of DCBA members surveyed said they use alternative travel modes to get to work, no DCBA members surveyed used the bus, despite free parking passes available from the City for people who work downtown.

**Current Status**

Subsequent to the CSU Chico study, CCFM management and the City have implemented several changes that impact parking in the market vicinity and “talk about relocating the farmers’ market [has] died down” (Speer 2009). Changes include installing
additional bike racks near the market and requiring vendors and encouraging customers to park further away from the market. “Meanwhile, the market’s franchise agreement with the City had automatically extended for another year” (Speer 2010). In July 2010, the Internal Affairs Committee approved franchise agreement amendments giving CCFM management authority over the entire MPL1 block, from “curb to curb,” and an extension to the notification period for making changes to the agreement (City of Chico Internal Affairs Committee 2010). Also discussed at this meeting were insurance coverage, franchise fee options, and street closures. No further action has been reported in Internal Affairs Committee reports. According to Assistant City Manager John Rucker, the Chico City Council adopted the provisions of the 2006 Downtown Access Plan (Rucker 2010). But due to pressure from the DCBA, as of this writing, the meter pricing changes had not been implemented (Chamberlain 2010). Meanwhile, the CCFM continues to enjoy success and to anchor downtown Chico on Saturday mornings.

Future Research

As farmers’ markets grow in number, they have provoked spatial contests between market managers and vendors and local businesses over which use of land most benefits communities. As the number of farmers’ markets increases, it might be beneficial for communities to have a process for working with local business districts when introducing a new farmers’ market. Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) concluded that further investigation is needed regarding economic conflicts between farmers’ markets and pre-existing businesses.
Though the CCFM doesn’t want to move, I agree that “City leaders, market organizers and local businesses need to come up with a vision that does justice to a Chico institution” (Speer 2009). The market could have a new designated home with permanent shelter, electricity, and rest rooms, like in Davis, California. More dialogue between all concerned parties could result in a different permanent location with full amenities for the CCFM and minimal disruption from the move itself.
REFERENCES CITED


California State University, Chico, College of Behavioral & Social Sciences. 2010. Collaborative Community-based Research across Disciplines and Communities. *Vanguard* 20:5.


LETTER INTRODUCING SURVEY

Dear DCBA Member,

Happy Holidays! I know this is a busy time, but if you have less than 20 minutes to take a short survey, I would appreciate it very much. The Chico Certified Farmers’ Market (CCFM) has been held on Saturday mornings in its current site, in the municipal parking lot (MPL1) bounded by Wall and Flume and 2nd and 3rd Streets, since 1993. Lately there has been public discussion about the location of the Saturday morning farmers’ market. Surveys of the market’s customers and participants have been conducted by other students at CSU Chico. It’s vital to hear from all concerned parties. Now it’s your turn, as a downtown merchant, to contribute your point of view! I will use the results of this study in my masters’ thesis relating the proximity of downtown merchants to the present farmers’ market location, and whether this affects perceptions of whether the market is beneficial or detrimental. Results will also be provided to the City.

What’s in it for me, you ask?
A) If you have an opinion on this issue, you get a chance to have your say.
B) You get the glow from being a good citizen by participating in a civic discussion.
C) You help a graduate student get her data (like when the angel Clarence got his wings, remember that movie?) so she can complete her masters’ thesis.

How do I take this survey? Click on this link <Insert link here> and you will be redirected to a private, impartial and confidential survey site. This link is good from noon on Wednesday 12/2 through noon on Monday 12/7. Please complete it as soon as possible!

This survey is being sent to members of the Downtown Chico Business Association. Your participation in this study is voluntary. To maintain the integrity of the data I need one response from each DCBA business or property owner. If you choose, your name will remain confidential and will not be included in the results or report. Study results may be presented in my class, in public meetings, academic papers and my thesis, and possibly at an academic conference.

Because this survey is being sent as a courtesy through the DCBA’s email and I am not in possession of your individual email addresses, please be sure to provide me with your street address, so I can map the results.

Also, if you would like to participate in a follow up interview, please include your contact information in the space provided at the end of the survey. THANK YOU!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Amy Lukens at alukens1@mail.csuchico.edu or my advisor, Dr. LaDona Knigge of CSU Chico’s Geography and Planning Department at lknigge@chico.edu.
APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND
INFORMED CONSENT

Downtown Merchants and the CCFM

1. Statement of Purpose

WELCOME!

Lately there has been public discussion about the location of the Saturday morning Farmers’ Market. The Chico Certified Farmers’ Market (CCFM) has been held on Saturday mornings in its current site, in the municipal parking lot (MPL) bounded by Wall and Flume and 2nd and 3rd Streets, since 1993. Surveys of the market’s farmer/vendors and customers have been conducted by other students at CSU Chico. It is vital to hear from all concerned parties. This questionnaire is to determine your preferences, as Chico’s downtown merchants. The results of all studies will be provided to the City of Chico.

Please continue with survey.

2. Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in Research
"Downtown Business Owner Attitudes about the Farmers’ Market"

Hello! My name is Amy Lukens. I am a graduate student at Chico State conducting a study for my masters’ thesis and a course taught by Dr. LaDonna Krogge in the Geography and Planning Department. I would like to interview you as a member of the Downtown Chico Business Association. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions and may end the interview at any time with no repercussions. You will experience no risks or tangible benefits from the research.

If you choose, your name will remain confidential and will not be included in the results or report. The results of my study will be presented to my class, public meetings, academic papers and my thesis. They may also be presented at academic conferences.

Your continuing with the survey indicates that you are eighteen years of age or older, have decided to volunteer as a research participant, that no questions have been answered satisfactorily, and that you understand the above information.

Contact person:
Amy Lukens
alukens1@mail.csuchico.edu
and
Dr. LaDonna Krogge
Dept of Geography & Planning
California State University, Chico
507 Butte Hall
Chico, CA 95929-0425
Phone: 530 898-5881
Email: lkrogge@csuchico.edu

1. I give my consent for my name to be used in the report.

☐ Yes, you may use my name.
☐ No, please do not use my name.

3. How long, Customers, Competitors
Downtown Merchants and the CCFM

2. How long have you been in business at your current location?
   Please enter number of years

3. Who are your biggest customers? (please check any that apply)
   - Seniors
   - Families
   - Downtown Residents
   - Old-time Chicoans
   [Other (please specify)]

4. Who are your biggest competitors? (please check any that apply)
   - Other businesses downtown
   - On-line businesses
   - Big box businesses on the edge of town
   [Other (please specify)]

4. Aspects of Doing Business
Downtown Merchants and the CCFM

5. What aspects of doing business in Chico's downtown do you value? (please rate from 1 low to 5 high)

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<th>1 low</th>
<th>2 moderately low</th>
<th>3 somewhat important</th>
<th>4 important</th>
<th>5 necessary</th>
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<td>Parking</td>
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<td>Promotions/Advertising</td>
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<td>It's Downtown!</td>
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<td>Downtown Activities</td>
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<td>Proximity to University</td>
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6. What else do you value about doing business downtown that wasn't mentioned above?

5. Attend and open Saturday mornings

7. Do you attend the Saturday Farmers' Market?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Is your business open on Saturday mornings?
   - Yes
   - No

6. If open Saturday

9. What time do you open on Saturday mornings?

7. Impacts
Downtown Merchants and the CCFM

10. Is your business impacted by the Saturday morning Farmers’ Market in the following areas?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strong Negative Effect</th>
<th>2 Moderate Negative Effect</th>
<th>3 Neutral Effect</th>
<th>4 Moderate Positive Effect</th>
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<td>Sales</td>
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<td>Foot Traffic</td>
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<td>Competition</td>
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<td>Other (please specify below)</td>
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Other

8. How far and Mode

11. How far do you live from work?

Please enter distance in miles

12. How do you usually get to work?

- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Bicycle
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Car
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

Other

9. If drive

13. If you drive, where do you park your car?

10. Additional Comments

14. Is there anything you would like to add?

Other
Downtown Merchants and the CCFM

11. Business & Location

* 15. Business name and street address for mapping purposes.
   - Company: 
   - Address: 
   - Address 2: 
   - City/Town: 
   - State: 

* 16. Type of Business.
   - Category:
     - Please indicate type of business to the right.
     - Other (please specify): 

12. Optional Contact Information for Follow-Up Interview

17. Optional - If you would like to participate in a personal follow-up interview please give me your contact information.

***Thank you!***

- Name: 
- Email Address: 
- Phone Number: 

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# CODE BOOK

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<td>told what to do</td>
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COMPARATIVE FARMERS’ MARKETS

To discover how farmers’ markets other than the CCFM operate and interact with local businesses, participant observation and informal interviews were conducted at six markets in northern California and Oregon (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Comparative Farmers’ Markets Visited

Markets visited were in Ashland and Eugene, OR, and in Sacramento, Marin County, Berkeley and Arcata, CA. All are in economically advantaged areas. Most are in college towns. A study of American college towns found they can contain “unusually high concentrations of people who . . . vote Green, or belong to a food co-op” (Gumprecht 2003, 55). I am including the Davis Farmers’ Market in this comparative
analysis but I did not visit it (see Table 3). Three farmers’ markets discussed had experienced conflict with local businesses and three had not.

Farmers’ markets in urban centers have faced opposition from local merchants. The Humboldt County Market in Arcata, CA, is held in the centrally-located Arcata Plaza. In the 1970’s when the market started, it was small and had no opposition. Since then it has grown and experienced ongoing conflict with surrounding businesses over parking. Further objections include (it is a) “virtual downtown party,” and “it attracts large numbers of young transients (and) public restrooms in the area continue to be of concern” (Spencer 2007). In Ashland, OR, the Rogue Valley Growers and Crafters (RVGC) Market was originally held downtown, but was criticized for taking up too much parking. In 2003, when the City of Ashland approved moving the market to the winter skating rink site, also downtown, local business owners felt that it gave market an unfair advantage. They interceded to prevent the move. Later that year the Ashland Armory filed for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the RVGC to hold the market in their parking lot on the edge of town, where it is held now. According to market officials the move away from downtown did not affect attendance (Deluca 2009). Heather Podoll, discussing the successful Davis Farmers’ Market, said “most farmers’ markets struggle with parking” (Podoll 2010). The Davis, CA, Farmers’ Market was located in several different downtown locations before finally settling in its current location. While there was controversy over the market’s location, they finally came to agreement when they moved to Central Park after negotiating with the city of Davis for amenities including a building providing cover, electricity and rest rooms (Podoll 2010).
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<th>Table 3: Comparative Farmers' Markets</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>City</strong></td>
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<td>Arcata</td>
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<td>Local Conflict</td>
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<td>Reason for Conflict</td>
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<td>How Solved OR Why no conflict</td>
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<td>Why no conflict</td>
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<td>Amenities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources: Data from fieldwork/websites as noted, all population figures US Census, 2008.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lotte Streisinger, founder of the Eugene Saturday Market, said it took five years for downtown merchants to accept the market, because it does not follow the customary rules for downtown merchandising. She explained that that is exactly what makes the market so appealing to consumers: “personal contact with the producer and the stories they can tell” (Streisinger 2010). This approach to the appeal of farmers’ markets appeal highlights customers, but what about the neighborhood they are located in?

I also conducted field observations at three markets that have not experienced conflict over parking with local businesses. None of them are downtown. The Thursday Berkeley Farmers’ Market was invited to nestle into a thriving merchant core at Shattuck & Rose, known as the “Gourmet Ghetto” (Feldman 2010). The other two, located in Marin County and Sacramento, are held in civic parking lots that are not used on weekends and are not located in downtown areas. The Florin Farmers’ Market in Sacramento is held in a state-owned lot under a freeway. Market management pays market rate for the land “so no one can push them around” (Best 2009). The Marin County Farmers’ Market is held in the Marin County Civic Center’s lot. On days when parking is needed for Civic Center purposes the market is relocated to the nearby Fairgrounds parking area.