

# TARANAKI FARMERS' MARKET

Supporting regional economic and  
food resilience by connecting small scale  
Taranaki food producers and customers

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*What makes the farmers market such a special place is that you're actually creating community around food.*

*- BRYANT TERRY*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Venture Taranaki Trust commissioned and funded this project with the primary purpose of understanding community engagement with sentiment about the Taranaki Farmers' Market ('the Market'), its product offering and its location.**

**From May to September 2023, the project was carried out in four phases: initiation, desktop research and discovery, community engagement and analysis.**

The core stakeholder group consisted of representatives from Taranaki Farmers' Market Board, Venture Taranaki and the New Plymouth District Council Community Partnerships team.

The project conducted a brief review of the Market's current operating environment and engaged with the Market Board to understand their perspectives. A specially designed online community survey was sent out which received 351 unique responses. Responses from the various channels were collated and analysed to develop insights and inform recommendations for ways the Market could improve and determine the support needed to realise the shared ambition.

Key findings showed that the case for increasing the size of the market is very strong, with respondents wanting more choice of produce and more stalls.

A comparative scan of other NZ farmers' markets was conducted in search of information on their set-ups, processes, successes and challenges, and supported this finding and revealed that Taranaki Farmers' Market's current location is preventing it from achieving its ambitions.

Recommendations were grouped into four broad categories by the project team and include:

- 1. Raising the education around local food systems and citizens' role in its resilience*
- 2. Engagement of current and potential producers to secure the future of the Market*
- 3. Developing the sector to increase the number of producers by providing tailored enterprise support and pathways to market*
- 4. Support the Market's short term location needs and co-design the long term plan*

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**The report has been prepared for Venture Taranaki Trust and Taranaki Farmers' Board by independent consultants, Tania Han and Caroline Shields.**

As a strategy, change and impact consultant with 20 years' experience across the private, public and community sectors, Tania is a highly adaptable thinker and doer. In Aotearoa, her work includes advising startup founders and social enterprises, managing change within the machinery of government, designing impact measurement frameworks and strengthening communities. Tania supports the Taranaki entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem through Doso (formerly Startup Taranaki). She works with clients in the areas of:

- strategy and investment
- engagement and communications
- continuous improvement
- impact measurement
- change management

Caroline is a strategy and design consultant with experience in the commercial and NGO sectors. As a design and communications specialist, Caroline has worked with some of Australia, New Zealand and London's leading creative agencies, non-profits and start-ups, utilising skills in research, ideation, creative strategy, campaigns and visual design to help clients achieve impact. She's a big picture thinker and natural problem solver, and thrives on trying to understand the heart of an issue.

The team would like to thank everyone who has been involved, particularly Matt Lamb from Venture Taranaki Trust for his insights and support, New Plymouth District Council Community Partnerships, and the Taranaki Farmers' Market Board, their Market stallholders, customers and committed supporters who provided us with their feedback. All personal information has been collected, used and stored in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 2020 and respondents' anonymity has been protected according to their preferences. The views, opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are strictly those of the authors and are current at the time of writing.

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Established in 2004 as a charitable trust governed by a Board of Trustees, the Taranaki Farmers' Market ('the Market') operates in Huatoki Plaza in the New Plymouth city centre every Sunday, with food growers and producers across Taranaki coming together all year round to sell directly to consumers.

Through 2022 and 2023, the Taranaki Farmers' Market Board, Venture Taranaki Trust and New Plymouth District Council (the 'stakeholder group') worked together to develop and agree on a shared ambition for the Market to:

- Attract more stallholders and customers
- Serve as a launching pad for food producers and small businesses to test their market, scale and grow
- Contribute to environmental benefits, and raise awareness of food provenance and food security issues
- Facilitate in-person interactions between producers and customers
- Contribute to a vibrant, thriving CBD and community feel

Venture Taranaki Trust commissioned this project with the primary purpose of understanding community engagement with and sentiment about the Market, its offering and its location. A decision to engage independent consultancy services was taken in order to ensure objectivity in approach and findings.

There were four key phases to the project: **initiation, desktop research and discovery, community engagement and analysis**, culminating in the

creation of this report. Following the project initiation, a review of Market documents and information was undertaken, and an initial kick-off workshop was conducted in June 2023. The workshop was attended by representatives from the Taranaki Farmers' Market Board, Venture Taranaki and the New Plymouth District Council Community Partnerships team. It was agreed that this group would form the key stakeholder group and that attendees would make or obtain the necessary decisions to move the project forward, should they be required.

In the research and discovery phase, the team conducted a brief review of the Market's current operating environment and a scan of selected farmers' markets across regional Aotearoa New Zealand, looking for information on their set-ups, processes, successes and challenges. In the community engagement phase, the team designed an online survey which was shared with the stakeholder group for review and testing. It was distributed via key online channels such as the Taranaki Farmers' Market and Venture Taranaki's social media channels. The team issued the survey via several community and aligned interest groups via online channels. The team also visited the Market over four Sundays in June and July 2023 to observe footfall and stallholder-customer interactions, and to get a general feel for the Market.

Responses from the various channels were collated and analysed to develop insights, inform recommendations for ways the Market could improve and determine the support needed to realise the shared ambition. Regular updates were provided to the stakeholder group throughout the project and the team attended the Taranaki Farmers' Market Board meeting in May to brief the Board on the project approach and again in August to share interim findings.

# FARMERS' MARKETS AND LOCAL FOOD RESILIENCE

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**According to Farmers' Markets New Zealand Association (FMNZA), farmers' markets distinguish themselves by primarily selling food that is produced within a defined local area (e.g. 2hr drive or 100km radius from the market) and where vendors must directly have been involved in the growing or production process.**

Farmers' Markets are usually weekly, community-driven events that provide a platform for local farmers, growers, artisans and food producers to sell their products directly to consumers. These markets emphasise the importance of local, seasonal, and sustainable produce and often take place in open-air settings such as parks, community centres and urban spaces. On their website, the NZFMA whose membership consists of farmers' markets across the country lists 25 registered members. These markets often become an integral part of a region's food culture, attracting both locals and tourists and creating an economic channel for small scale producers.

Farmers' markets provide a way for local producers to sell their products directly to consumers without the need for intermediaries. They can be helpful for microscale growers for whom other channels of selling such as supplying outlets, having their own retail or online stores may not be viable or desirable. This helps to strengthen local food systems and support the livelihoods of small-scale growers, and can be particularly important in ensuring a region's food resilience in the case of supply chain disruption, for example due to extreme weather events.

The emphasis on locally grown and seasonal produce at farmers' markets ensures that consumers have access to high-quality, nutrient-rich produce. Since the products are often sourced from nearby farms, they often have a shorter supply chain, leading to fresher products. Sourcing food as locally as possible reduces the carbon footprint of food transportation. Additionally, farmers' markets promote sustainable and regenerative growing practices, with growers often reducing their use of synthetic chemicals and promoting biodiversity on their properties. Even though organic and other certification are often out of reach of small-scale producers due to costs and time involved, many small scale producers voluntarily adopt organic and regenerative growing practices, which contributes to improved ecological health.





Markets contribute to the local economy by generating income for growers, vendors and other workers. The money spent at farmers' markets circulates within the community, boosting local businesses and creating job opportunities. Purchasing from local growers ensures more of our region's spending stays within the region. They also serve as community hubs where people gather to shop and connect with other members of their local community. Markets can offer educational opportunities for consumers to learn about where their food comes from, how it is grown, and how to prepare it. This knowledge can foster a deeper appreciation for food and agriculture.

In the past, farmers' markets may have suffered from a lack of public understanding of the true cost of growing food in a sustainable way. A recent survey conducted by the FMNZ revealed that buying food directly from producers costs less than buying the same basket of goods from supermarkets, saving up to 18% by shopping at farmers' markets. A 2022 Commerce Commission inquiry of the grocery sector found evidence of sustained high prices and uncompetitive behaviour. In this climate of rising costs of living, farmers' markets are well positioned to take on more of the market share of feeding our communities.

<sup>1</sup> [Farmers' Market New Zealand](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Cost of Living: Here's how much you could save by switching to the farmers' market](#) (Stuff, 2023)

# THE TARANAKI FARMERS' MARKET

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Established in 2004 as a charitable trust governed by a Board of Trustees, the Taranaki Farmers' Market operates in Huatoki Plaza in the New Plymouth city centre every Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The exception to this has been its occasional relocation to other locations to make way for a Council-managed event such the winter edition of the TSB Festival of Lights festival in July 2023. Food growers and producers from across Taranaki come together all year round under almost all weather conditions, with the Market providing them with a face-to-face retail channel to sell directly to. At the time of this project's initiation in May 2023, the Market contracted a part-time market coordinator and a part-time market assistant – whose roles are critical to managing the day-to-day operations for the Market and acts as the conduit between the Board and current and potential stallholders, and to continue engaging and growing its audience on social media and other channels. There has been significant feedback from stallholders, as well as from other markets, on the immense benefit of having a Coordinator in role that can connect the public with the market. As of September 2023, only the market assistant remains in role, coordinating the market operations.

The Market's main mission is to "support and stimulate profitable trading and business growth of independent primary producers, hobby farmers, community and home gardeners, and associated produce value-adders and cottage industries, and to provide customers with regular supplies of fresh local food and access to improved nutrition." Three of the five incumbent Board of Trustees are either current or past stallholders and all share a passion for creating a more sustainable food production model whilst championing the local food movement and food security.

It's aims, as set out in their Charter, are to:

- facilitate the formation of a network of producers and consumers of primary produce in Taranaki
- provide an easily accessible and affordable infrastructure for both consumers and producers in a central location in Taranaki on a regular basis
- support the viable and self-sufficient operation of existing and future producers, small businesses and cottage industries in Taranaki
- promote, support and further the rapport and understanding between local producer and consumer in Taranaki by means of information, education and needs evaluation and by working closely with the local authorities; and
- provide the Taranaki community with locally grown and produced wholesome food at market related prices.

Only food or food products that have been grown, made or produced by the stallholder or their family-members or employees in Taranaki can be sold at the market, with a few exceptions such as in the interests of providing a wider range of products at the market. The Market Board reviews and approves or declines each application, with the support of the Coordinator(s).

Approved stallholders can be on site from 7:30am-1:00pm and must arrive no later than 8:30am. Stallholders must remain at their stalls until the close of the market at 12:00pm, regardless of whether they have any stock left. Pack up of stalls and the entire plaza must be completed by 1:00pm<sup>4</sup>.

Access to the current site is highly restrictive, with stallholders needing to cart in their produce by

<sup>3</sup>[Farmers' Market Taranaki – About Us](#)





Figure 1: Taranaki Farmers' Market on Currie Street (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market)

hand from wherever they manage to park. There is no dedicated stallholder parking in front the plaza on Devon Street or adjacent to the plaza in James Lane and stallholders have to rely on chance availability upon their arrival. To make parking available for other stallholders, market customers and the general public, stallholders are asked to move any vehicles parked adjacent to the market, to at least a block away from the plaza so other stallholders, customers and the general public can use those spaces. At the end of a market, any stallholders who have remained parked nearby are requested to wait for another stallholder to approach to take that space, before vacating it. The lack of dedicated parking and associated problems cause significant delays and logistic challenges for stallholders during set up and pack down.

When the Market was first established in 2004, it operated out of the car park at Western Institute of Technology Taranaki (WITT), the local polytechnic and vocational skills training college. Due to it being on the fringes of the city, it wasn't considered a favourable location which led the Trust to move the Market to the car park behind The Mill on Carrington Street. This new location, whilst more central, was still out of the way as it was tucked behind a building and not visible directly from the street. In anecdotal feedback obtained during the engagement process, some customers remembered the Mill car park location as being devoid of character. Operational challenges led the Trust to seek another location, initially with a street market on King Street as a contender. While this was met with resistance from residents and tenants in the vicinity, the Market did

eventually find a solution in Currie Street, from where it operated weekly from 2010 until 2020. During this period, the Market operated out of Huatoki Plaza over the winter months and did encounter the occasional objection to its occupation of Currie Street, however this was resolved in the Market's favour. On the [Citizens Advice Bureau website](#) and several other websites, the Market is still listed as being "in Currie Street (Spring, Summer & Autumn) or on Huatoki Plaza (Winter)". The Currie Street location was eventually unsustainable as it required significant resources to be directed towards the weekly road closure and adhere to Council regulations and by-laws.

Towards the end of 2020, the Market moved to Huatoki Plaza as the all-year location, where they have remained throughout the year ever since, with the exception of one or two seasonal pop-up markets at Currie Street and the aforementioned occasions where the market was relocated to make way for other Council-managed events being held in the same location.

At the point of writing, the team were advised that the market usually hosts 11-18 stalls each week and has the capacity for 25 stalls, so there is room for more stalls at the current location. However access challenges for stallholders would remain and potentially be exacerbated with an increase in stalls without any reserved loading zones allocated. Feedback from surveys, including one issued as part of this project and discussed later in this report, also suggest customers would prefer a different location, hence the need to establish the case for the Market to consider moving.

<sup>4</sup> [Taranaki Farmers' Market Stallholder Information Pack May 2023](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Council to decide the future of the market](#) (Taranaki Daily News, 2006)

<sup>6</sup> [Farmers' market will stay in the centre of New Plymouth despite retailer protests](#) (Stuff, 2016)

# KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

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## Summary

An online community engagement survey was selected as the most efficient way of gathering community sentiment from regular visitors to the market and those who had visited in the past but no longer do so regularly.

Engagement with the survey received **351** unique responses, with **88%** of respondents being current or past market customers.

The case for a bigger market is very strong, with more choice of produce and more stalls making up **58%** of the total number of motivating factors that will entice visitors to visit more frequently.

In comparing Taranaki Farmers' Market with other markets in similar sized places around New Zealand, there is some indication that the Market's current location and other factors relating to its product offering and operations could be preventing it from reaching its potential.





## Community engagement and feedback

From 12 July to 31 July, the survey received 351 unique responses and 12,943 individual data points. The survey was issued via the Market's and Venture Taranaki's social media channels, through various community groups and through personal networks. Flyers were placed in locations around town where interest-aligned potential customers frequent and at the Market itself. Whilst customers of the Market had been surveyed before, most recently November 2021 by the Market itself, this time around, the project team structured questions in a way that enabled clear understanding and decision support. For example, the ability to observe statistical mode – the most frequently observed value(s) in a data point or data set – allows the decision makers to determine the intensity of community sentiment.

Descriptive characteristics of respondents are provided in Appendix 3.

The enthusiastic response indicates strong community interest in and strong sentiments about the Market. Respondents are keen to see it be more successful: -

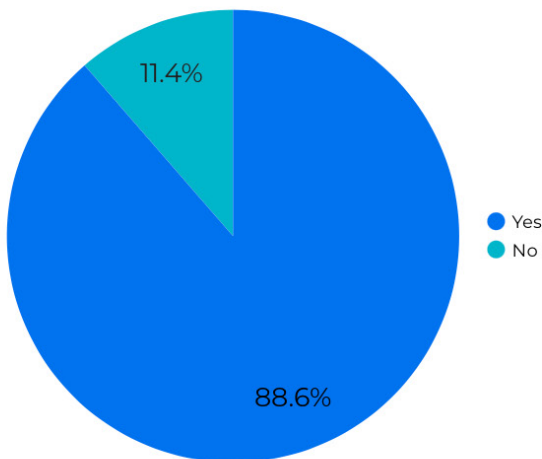
*“More stands! Often not worth the trip for only a few stands. Would be good to see some wider marketing to vendors to entice them to exhibit. So many great produce producers, beverage producers and farmers in the region who aren’t there.”*

Of the 311 respondents that had visited the market, 83% of them drove their own vehicle to the market. This highlights the need to ensure there is sufficient parking space to meet a higher number of visitors in the future, unless alternative transport modes are improved.

64% of past visitors had visited either only once in

the 3 months prior or not visited in the 3 months prior. There was a strong desire expressed by these respondents for more choice of produce. The data also indicates that 87% of visitors spend less than 30 minutes at the Market. Further investigation will be required to understand whether there is a correlation between length of time spent at market, frequency of visit and the amount of produce purchased.

**Have you ever visited the market?  
(yes=311; no=40)**



**Travel modes**

How do you usually get to the market?	Percentage of total
1. Drive my own vehicle	82.96%
2. Walk	8.68%
3. Cycle or scooter	5.79%
4. Car pool	1.61%
5. A mix of car pool / borrow...	0.32%
6. Electric car	0.32%
7. Both walk or cycle	0.32%

**Visit frequency & length**

How many times in the past 3 months have you visited the market?	Percentage of total
1. Have not visited in the las...	36.01%
2. At least once in the last 3 ...	27.97%
3. Once a month	20.58%
4. Every week or most weeks	14.79%
5. Have never visited	0.64%

In general, how much time do you usually spend at the market?	Percentage of total
1. Less than 15 minutes	47.91%
2. 15 to 30 minutes	39.23%
3. 30 minutes or more	10.29%
4. I do not go to the market	2.57%

Figure 2: Charts showing proportion of respondents' who had visited the Market, visit frequency, length of visit and mode of travel to the Market (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market 2023 Community Survey)



Respondents were asked to provide free-text responses on what would encourage or enable to visit the market more frequently: -

*“I love a good farmer’s market and really a good one can sustain almost year round. Can’t wait to see this one develop. I was so excited to attend but bummed at the size and the quality.”*

The qualitative responses were collated by the first 4 topics mentioned, with 19 identifiable themes emerging. Those emerging with most frequency are below:

- More variety and choice of produce was mentioned 233 times (40.7% of all themes identified across responses)
- More stalls and producers received the next highest at of 99 mentions (17.3%)
- A better location was third with 43 mentions (7.5%), and is a critical enabler for the first two themes to be addressed.

**What would encourage or enable you to visit the Farmers' Market?**

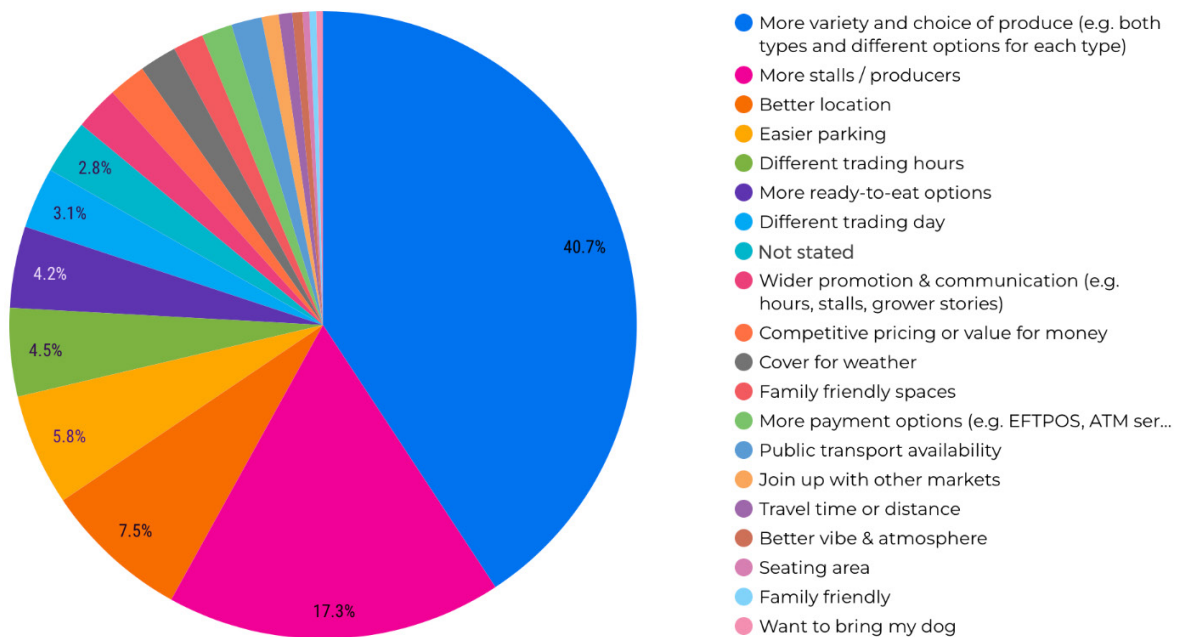


Figure 3: Pie chart showing motivating factors that would encourage or enable respondents to visit the market more frequently (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market Community Survey 2023)





## Market visits and observations

The team visited the market on several occasions during the course of the project. Stallholders had been briefed about the project and were happy to chat and share their thoughts with us. Most stallholders felt that attending the Market was worth their time. There seemed to be a cautious ambivalence about moving locations, about half of the stallholders appeared to support a new location and another half were either undecided or subtly against moving. The coffee cart was doing a brisk business and there were people sitting at the centre tables enjoying their ready-to-eat foods.

Some stallholders were very popular and had finished selling by 9:30am on the day of our visit. Stallholders must remain at their stalls until the close of the market at 12:00pm, regardless of whether they have any stock left. Whilst this is standard practice across most markets globally and there is an opportunity for the sold-out producers to take some time out or engage with customers, there is also an opportunity to consider a shared stall concept or an alternative model to cater for these situations, and so that customers may have increased choice and availability of similar products that are in high demand. As one marketgoer put it to us:

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*“I only come for the eggs and bread, and I usually get a coffee while I’m here. I have to get here at 8:45 for eggs or they’d be sold out otherwise. I don’t know why we can’t have more vendors selling eggs.”*

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One stallholder didn’t feel selling at the Market was financially worthwhile, this appeared more a constraint of their operational capacity, rather than the Market’s. We heard some dissatisfaction around the alleged, and possibly historical, practice of not allowing competing products, and the disallowing of products with ingredients produced outside of Taranaki. There was a feeling that this limits options for customers and doesn’t encourage producer excellence. There were also a few complaints about the lack of stallholder carpark / loading zones. As our scope did not include extensive engagement with market stallholders, we recommend some work be undertaken to consult with stallholders more constructively and seek their input on how the market could be improved for them, and by extension, the customers. We have included a recommendation on this.

## Awareness and education on local and seasonal food

Whilst the community survey did not ask respondents how they defined farmers’ market, the feedback through that channel and through community conversations indicated that there is no consistent understanding across the board of what constitutes a farmers’ market. Modern consumer behaviour is also shaped by the year-round availability of a huge range of produce, although seasonal pricing still applies. There is an opportunity for the Market and its partners to educate the community about what a farmers’ market is and should be, the benefits of eating seasonally and the true cost of food, and how consumers can directly contribute to the resilience and diversity of the local food economy. This would be in line with the aim within the Market’s charter to “promote, support and further the rapport and understanding between local producer and consumer in Taranaki by means of information, education and needs evaluation and by working closely with the local authorities”.

## Location characteristics and preferences

In order to determine the location requirements:

- A requirements gathering exercise was initiated to support spatial planning and analysis; further detailed needs analysis is recommended
- Locations that were deemed to meet the most requirements were shortlisted and sent to the NPDC Parks team for comment and advice
- The community survey included questions on specific location options generated by stakeholders to this research project and location characteristics that visitors ranked accordingly to essentiality

The table below shows the high-level requirements that would support the growth ambition of the Market and has been shared with the NPDC Parks team to **“promote, support and further the rapport and understanding between local producer and consumer in Taranaki by means of information, education and needs evaluation and by working closely with the local authorities”**.

	Current requirements	Projected requirements
Operational hours	Set up from 7:30 am, market operational from 9 to 12 midday, bump out by 1pm	
Number of stalls	11-18	30-35
Stall size	10ft x 10ft	10ft x 10ft
Estimated visitor numbers	300-400	500-600
Storage	Yes (size tbc)	Yes (size tbc)
Waste disposal	Council bins in Huatoki Plaza	Is a requirement
Other facilities required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public toilets</li> <li>• Free street parking or first hour free across the road at Centre City Shopping Centre</li> <li>• No loading zone for stallholder unloading and re-loading</li> <li>• Capacity for two powered sites (1 reserved for musicians)</li> <li>• Storage requirements</li> <li>• Seating area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public toilets</li> <li>• Car parking for customers</li> <li>• Car parking for stallholders (pref adjacent to their stalls)</li> <li>• Multiple powered sites</li> <li>• Storage requirements</li> <li>• Seating area</li> <li>• Family friendly space</li> </ul>

Table 1: Current and projected requirements for spatial planning and analysis of new locations (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market Coordinator, 2023)

## Location shortlist pros and cons – desktop assessment

Locations	Pros	Cons
Pukekura Park near Rogan Street / Band Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Green space + flat</li> <li>✓ Toilets and playground</li> <li>✓ Lots of parking and overflow at TSB Stadium)</li> <li>✓ Grass and hard surface</li> <li>✓ Council-owned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Space may not be big enough</li> <li>✗ Possible trading conflict with Tea House with ready-to-eat food</li> <li>✗ No cover for weather</li> </ul>
Brooklands Park near Zoo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Large flat green space</li> <li>✓ Set amongst park and nature</li> <li>✓ Good road access</li> <li>✓ Market would be a bonus attraction to tourists and visitors that stumble upon it on a park visit</li> <li>✓ Market visitors can enjoy the wider park at the same time (e.g. Brooklands Zoo, Pukekura Park, playgrounds)</li> <li>✓ Public toilets</li> <li>✓ Option for storage at Envirohub</li> <li>✓ Council-owned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Not available during public and private events (Rogan Street park may be a back up option or the Council may see the privilege a long term tenant that delivers considerable community benefit)</li> <li>✗ Limited parking as the Market may take over the overflow car park</li> <li>✗ Potential risk of damage to turf</li> </ul>
East End Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Waterfront location</li> <li>✓ Large, flat, green space + flat</li> <li>✓ Possibility of partial cover for weather</li> <li>✓ Near the Coastal Walkway</li> <li>✓ Toilets and playground</li> <li>✓ Lots of parking</li> <li>✓ Council-owned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Outdoor area exposed to the weather</li> <li>✗ Could get bumped for events (although not many)</li> <li>✗ Away from the main city centre</li> </ul>
Puke Ariki Landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Waterfront location</li> <li>✓ Large, flat, green space + flat</li> <li>✓ Near the Coastal Walkway</li> <li>✓ Nearby toilets and playground</li> <li>✓ High visibility</li> <li>✓ Council-owned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Outdoor area exposed to the weather</li> <li>✗ Could get bumped for events</li> <li>✗ Potential risk of damaging field</li> <li>✗ Nearer to main roads</li> </ul>
Combining with the Seaside Market at Ngāmotu Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Waterfront location</li> <li>✓ Large, flat, green space + flat</li> <li>✓ Near the Coastal Walkway</li> <li>✓ Nearby toilets and playground</li> <li>✓ High visibility</li> <li>✓ Potential for increased patronage due to attracting those who go to Seaside Market but not FM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Exposed to weather; Seaside Market does not operate in adverse weather</li> <li>✗ Different operating and business models</li> <li>✗ Risk of brand confusion</li> <li>✗ Future separation may be more difficult</li> </ul>
Central School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Large, flat, green space</li> <li>✓ Toilets and playground</li> <li>✓ Use an otherwise unused space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Potential risk of damaging field</li> <li>✗ Not visible from road and thoroughfare</li> </ul>

Table 2: Pros & cons of shortlisted location options

Most of the locations on the shortlist were then included in the community survey, in which respondents were asked to rank five location options from the most desirable to least desirable. Care was taken to ensure that the options were sufficiently specific and that respondents were aware that locations might not be workable for operational reasons.

**Per Figure 4, respondents collectively ranked:**

1. A waterfront location (e.g. East End, Ngāmotu Beach) as the most popular first choice
2. A park in the central city as the most popular second choice
3. A different central city location (e.g. a precinct including Currie Street, King Street etc) as the most popular third choice
4. Staying at Huatoki Plaza as the most popular fourth choice
5. A longer term, purpose built space as the most popular fifth choice

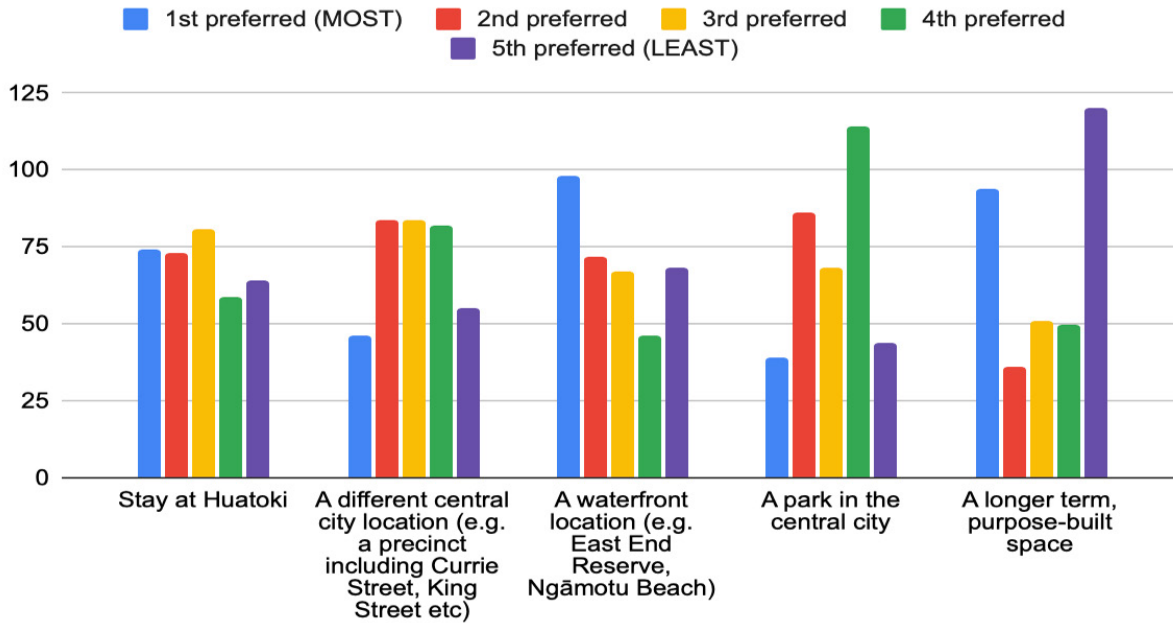
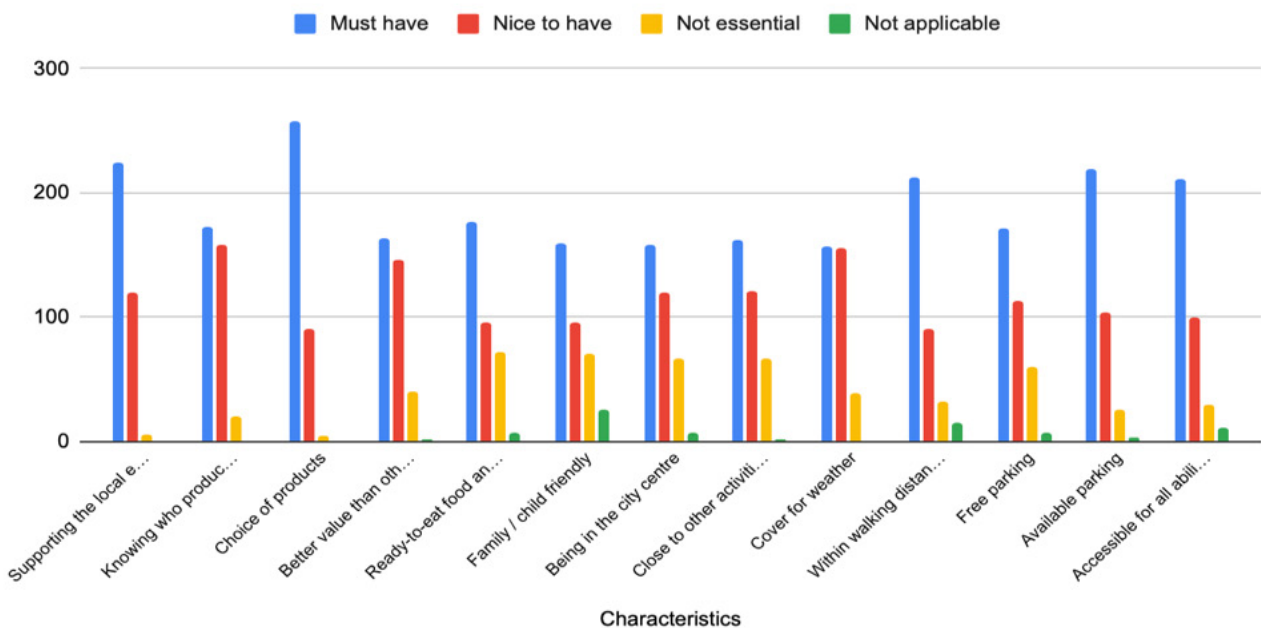


Figure 4: Chart showing ranked preferences for possible Market locations (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market Community Survey 2023)

Respondents were also asked to rank key market characteristics by essentiality. The characteristics were created with stakeholders during the project initiation workshop.





*“A better location that has better parking and feels more market like rather than the concrete jungle where you currently are. A much bigger and better range of stalls so you want to spend longer there. You need stalls with food you can eat there so you can eat/drink as you wander round the stalls. More diversity of stalls there. I really want a great farmers market here like in other towns but it’s just never taken off.”*



Figure 5: Design render of a Currie Street dedicated to people (Source: Isthmus)

## A longer term view - linking in with the Ngāmotu New Plymouth City Strategy

There is an opportunity for NPDC to work more closely with the Market and other stakeholders in progressing the proposals set forth in the [Ngāmotu New Plymouth City Strategy](#). In speaking with the design agency responsible for the concept designs, we learned that the Market had been considered as part of the design process. Within the Strategy, the Council has identified that, “feedback from the engagement phases of the Strategy indicated that access to affordable fresh food and market activity at night-time would be desirable [...] Currie Street is well placed to be the prime outdoor marketplace in New Plymouth. It’s envisioned that it becomes quality shared space environment that can host markets and events while still functioning as a city centre street that is vibrant and accessible.”

## A comparative scan of farmers' market around NZ

We compared Taranaki Farmers' Market with a cohort of carefully selected markets from around the country, based on factors such as their popularity as a visitor attraction, the type of location they operate from, suggestions from project stakeholders and similar population and regional characteristics. Initial email contact was made with the managers of the shortlisted markets, followed by a survey that was specifically designed for the project and sent out via the Farmers' Markets New Zealand Association newsletter, with the assistance of the Association Chair, Jono Walker.

We received responses from **12 farmers' markets** via both channels. Table 1 outlines the estimated population of their assumed catchment areas, number of stalls on a weekly and peak basis and visitor numbers. Where ranges were provided, a conservative midpoint was selected at the discretion of the project team. No response was received from Whanganui River Markets however due to their proximity and popularity they have been retained in the table.

Farmers' Markets around NZ: Stall capacity and visitor estimates										
Market	Estimated population (Stats NZ, 2018)	Weekly stalls	Peak / max stall capacity	Estimated visitors	Opening hours	Weekly stall fee?	Annual fee?	Equipment fee?	Power fee?	
1. Grey Lynn Markets'	82,866 (Waitematā Local Board Area)	40	40	1000	Sunday am	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
2. Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market	81,537 (Hastings District)	55	70	3000	Sunday am	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
3. Taranaki Farmers' Market	80,679 (New Plymouth District)	14	18	400	Sunday am	Yes	No	No	No	
4. Matakana Farmers' Market	79,400 (Rodney Ward, Auckland)	50	50	3000	Saturday am	Yes	No	No	No	
5. Clevedon Village Farmers Market	74,838 (Franklin Local Board)	50	70	No data	Sunday am	Yes	No data	No data	No data	
6. Cambridge Farmers' Market	53,241 (Waipa District)	30	50	1500	Saturday am	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
7. Nelson Farmers' Market	50,880 (Nelson City)	10	25	300	Wednesday am	Yes	Yes	No data	No data	
8. Marlborough Farmers' Market	47,340 (Marlborough District)	30	30	1500	Sunday am	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
9. Whanganui River Markets'	45,309 (Whanganui District)	No data	No data	No data	Saturday am	No data	No data	No data	No data	
1... Lyttelton Farmers' Market	2,982 (Lyttelton); 369,006 (Christchurch City)	30	50	No data	Saturday am	Yes	No data	No data	No data	
11. Hamilton Farmers' Market	160,911 (Hamilton City)	40	80	2000	Sunday am	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
1... Tauranga Farmers' Market	136,713 (Tauranga City)	50	68	2500	Saturday am	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
1... Otago Farmers' Market	126,255 (Dunedin City)	50	65	4000	Saturday am	Yes	No	No	Yes	
1... Amberley Farmers' Market	12,558 (Hurunui District)	14	25	200	Saturday am	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	

Table 3: Comparison table of a selection of farmers' markets around New Zealand, catchment population, stall capacity and visitor numbers (Source: Farmers' Markets Around New Zealand 2023 Survey)

Taranaki Farmers' Market is included in the table above, which we ranked by the estimated population of the markets' assumed catchment areas, with population estimates sourced from [Stats NZ's 2018 census data](#). Using this as a key reference, it is evident that the Taranaki Farmers' Market is significantly undersized compared to other cities with populations similar to that of New Plymouth's of c.80,000 people. The Hawkes Bay Farmers' Market which serves the Hastings District with roughly the same population, hosts 55 stalls and sees an estimated visitor count of 3000. Although it is difficult to establish a direct causal link between the number of stalls and the number of visitors and there are many other factors that make a market attractive, there does appear to be a correlation when we examine that the two markets with similar stall numbers to Taranaki (fewer than 20) – Amberley and Nelson Farmers' Markets – also reported similar visitor numbers (200-400). Both these markets serve populations that are smaller than Taranaki. This presents a strong case that space constraints in Huatoki Plaza could be inhibiting the Market's growth and its ability to live up to its potential.

All markets charge weekly stall fees that range between \$30 and \$65, with one market charging a fee as percentage of revenue (i.e. 10% of takings up to a maximum of \$40) to defray the impact on producers with smaller turnover. 8 markets also charge a power connection fee, 6 charge an annual membership fee in addition to their weekly stall fee and 4 charge equipment hire fees. 1 market reported charging stallholders a marketing fee.

Almost all of the locations have some form of natural scenery, whether it be a large grassy area, trees or a river, or a backdrop of hills. The locations of the markets included:

- Showgrounds or events centres with plenty of green space or rural surroundings
- Central city locations like town squares, parks, community buildings and car parks

- Community hubs, like local schools or community centres
- Closed off public streets like Lyttelton Market which allows for a street festival vibe
- A purpose built location like Matakana Village Market

The majority of Markets outside of central city locations have ample dedicated parking. Urban locations have either street parking or nearby offsite parking like a multi-storey car park. Around half the markets surveyed operate on Saturday mornings and the other half on Sunday mornings. One market operates on a Wednesday morning.

In response to a question about their biggest challenges, the markets identified concerns around:

- Securing sufficient stallholders to provide enough products to meet their customers' needs and demands, whilst ensuring a balance of producer types (e.g. fresh produce, value-added, ready-to-eat) (frequency=2)
- Identifying and developing the next generation of primary producers particularly growers, particularly as producers retire with no succession plans, not enough younger people taking up the profession and land is sold for development (frequency=4)
- Bad growing seasons due to changing weather patterns and ecological degradation and damage to crops following extreme weather events (frequency=2)
- Appointing the right type of person in the market manager (frequency=1)

Markets vary in their communication channels to customers, ranging from dedicated websites, social media pages or regular newsletters (for example, these from [Lyttelton Farmers' Market](#)), or a mix of these.

## System enablement and innovation support for small scale producers

The majority of the markets do not receive any external support (e.g. financial or non-financial from their local Council or Regional Economic Development Agencies, or grant funders). One market reported receiving discounted rent from their Council, another receives discounted rent from the tenant of a Council-owned property and a third reported having a Council Licence to Occupy. Two other markets reported receiving contestable, project-specific funding from Councils for initiatives like waste minimisation and bike events. Given Taranaki Farmers' Market's small size in relation to the city's population, there is a role for Venture Taranaki to play to continue supporting the market as an economic development, innovation and tourism asset by and for the community.

These findings echo perspectives as far back as 2009. In 2016, during a New Plymouth District Council Regulatory Meeting where the Market was allowed to remain trading from Currie Street despite retailer protests, some Councillors urged the Council to do more to celebrate and promote local produce, goods and services. "You ladies and gentlemen, Mr chairman, have a fantastic opportunity right now to actually work as a council to help enhance the farmers' market. Make it into a tourist attraction. Get local producers, local people, growing, employing people and [turn it] into a really vibrant scene," one former South Taranaki District Councillor was quoted as saying. This was echoed by an incumbent New Plymouth District

Councillor at the time, "I'm totally for this. We've been struggling to find things that would make our CBD more vibrant. The idea of farmers' markets, it's a growing section of our economy, it's more than just a market, it's a part of our economy."

The stakeholder group indicated their shared ambition for the Market to be a test bed for new products. This allows the producer to trial small batches and get valuable customer feedback before incurring full production costs for a product that may not meet customer needs and demands. As a low cost, low barrier channel, farmers' markets are an excellent opportunity for new, start-up producers to access an established customer base at the Market, learn from other producers and feel their way to their own niche by their interactions with customers and other stallholders. In order for the Market to maximise its potential in this area, there may need to be some flexibility within the Market's stallholder selection process and the way it facilitates a 'test' environment. One producer who had recently moved to Taranaki found it to be a valuable way to get the word out about their new venture and to build a customer base, in a way that was affordable and accessible. With the Market's growing activity and audience on social media, producers stand to experience adjacent benefits through the Market's weekly marketing activities, potentially creating a funnel for their own media platforms. There are also opportunities to support producers on how to improve their operations, on 'right-scaling' to achieve even better outcomes and complementary pathways to both existing and new markets. Further work in this area is recommended.







# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based on the findings and observations presented above, the team derived ten key recommendations that we believe will support the Market to achieve its ambitions. Recommendations are embedded within four broad categories, per the table 4:

1

Raise the education around local food systems and citizens' role in its resilience

2

Actively engage current and potential producers to secure the future of the Market

3

Develop the sector of small-scale producers

4

Support the Market's short term location needs and co-design the long term plan

No.	Category	Recommendation	Potential role of stakeholder		
			Market Board	Venture Taranaki	NPDC
1	Awareness and education	“Market the Market” as a prime retail outlet for producers to sell directly to customers from a central New Plymouth location; raise awareness of farmers’ markets and their benefits, and of eating seasonally (refer <a href="#">example newsletter</a> )	Responsible	Support	Support
2	Producer engagement	Conduct anonymous in-person ballot box poll with stallholders for the Board to understand the impact of fee increase on each stallholder.	Responsible	N/A	N/A
3	Producer engagement	Create a database of current, previous and potential vendors to maintain a pipeline of potential vendors, consider a keep-in-touch communications strategy like a monthly newsletter	Responsible	Support	Support
4	Producer engagement	Engage current stallholders more actively as partners who help create a thriving market, advocates who attract other producers and customers and co-creators of future improvements to the Market, including consulting on a process for increasing the variety and choice of similar category products.	Responsible	Support	Support
5	Producer engagement	Implement a shared stall for micro scale producers who can’t turn over enough revenue to cover stall fees, as a way for them to test their market.	Responsible	Support, Consulted	Support
6	Producer engagement	Identify and verify the number of small scale producers in the region and support them to connect and collaborate with each other.	Support	Responsible	Support
7	Sector enablement & development	Creating an enterprise development programme tailored for small-scale agriculture and food production.	Support, Consulted	Responsible	Support, Consulted
8	Sector enablement & development	Develop a multi-channel communications campaign in collaboration with the Market and other partners, to educate on local food systems and raise profile of the Market	Support, Consulted	Responsible	Support, Consulted
9	Location and placemaking	Assess and communicate feasibility of Council locations that will enable the Market to grow number of stalls to 30+, or provide alternative suggestions	Support, Consulted	Support, Consulted	Responsible
10	Location and placemaking	Work closely with Market Board, the community and other stakeholder on how the Market fits in with the Ngāmotu New Plymouth City Centre Strategy.	Support, Consulted	Support, Consulted	Responsible

Table 4: Ten key recommendations

## A note on the Market's location

Location requirements, options and rankings are outlined earlier in this report, however the final decision on a new location needs further deliberation from relevant parties. Each location has pros and cons, and will require trade-offs. For example, moving to a waterfront location, whilst popular with survey respondents, may mean the market will have no or limited shelter from inclement weather. This might not deter customers who can come and go swiftly, but stallholders who have to endure those conditions for the duration of the market may be discouraged from attending. Care should be taken to identify any unintended consequence and mitigate them accordingly.

We recommend that the Market remain on Council or publicly-owned property on the assumption that this provides a stronger possibility of securing a long term location and its future. For this to occur, there are multiple operational, political and economic factors that need to be considered. A well designed change management plan will be required to ensure that stallholders, customers, nearby retailers and organisations, and the wider community understand the reasons behind the move, what the changes would be and how they stand to benefit from the change.

## A further note for Venture Taranaki

From a sector and economic development perspective, we highly recommend revisiting the [findings from the 2020 Farming to Flourish project](#), as there is an opportunity create a small-scale agriculture / food producer sub-strategy as part of the Branching Out or future food sector strategies. We believe that an enterprise development support programme tailored for small-scale agriculture and food production would be a capability offering that may be welcomed by this community. There is also an opportunity to nurture and grow enterprise skills within the teams who lead and manage community gardens, potentially in collaboration with an organisation such as Sustainable Taranaki, and other capability development organisations in the region.

This could include, but not be limited to, modules on business modelling, channel marketing and customer acquisition. A thriving market can present itself as an enticing tourism attraction in our region, contribute to more positive visitor experiences, and provide a way to showcase the produce and producers of our region.

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*“More products, stalls please. When we travel around NZ we always try to find farmers markets and they are awesome, [but] we rarely come to the Taranaki Farmers Market because it is not very interesting.”*

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## A further note for New Plymouth District Council

New Plymouth District Council provided a grant to the Market in 2020 and provides the lease of the space for below-market rent. We recommend that the Council continues to provide space at no or low rent so the Market can expand and be able to sustain itself financially. While most of the markets in our survey indicated they received little support from their local Councils, in places such as Hamilton, Cambridge, Feilding, Wellington and Nelson, the District Councils either provide financial or non-financial support for their markets. There is an opportunity to strengthen the working relationship between Council and the Market as we believe that it could be an important piece in our district and region's food security strategy. We noted above that consideration has been given to the Market as part of the City Centre Strategy, and whilst its longer timeline does not meet the immediate needs of the Market, we recommend that the Market Board and NPDC work together to ensure alignment with Long Term Plans and to co-design the Currie Street City Centre core amenity upgrades.



# APPENDICES

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## Appendix 1: Community survey question bank

Question	Type	Options
What suburb do you live in?	Free text	
What type of household do you live in?	Single select multiple choice	Living arrangements
Before this survey, were you aware of the weekly Farmers Market in Huatoki Plaza held every Sunday?	Single select multiple choice	Yes No
In general, how much time do you usually spend at the market?	Single select multiple choice	Less than 15 mins 15-30 minutes 30+ minutes
How do you usually get to the market?	Single select multiple choice	Drive own vehicle Car poo Cycle / scooter / mobility vehicle, Walk
Do you regularly or occasionally combine your market visit with other activities in the area?	Multi select multiple choice by frequency	Yes – walk Yes – scooter / bike Yes – drive No
Before this survey, did you know that the Farmers' Market runs in Huatoki Plaza every Sunday?	Single select multiple choice	Yes No
What would encourage or enable you to visit the Farmers' Market? (e.g. accessibility, transport, the day, its location, range of produce etc)	Free text	
Which of the following do you / would you purchase from the market?	Multi select multiple choice by frequency	List of produce
How important are these factors in your decision to visit the market	Multi select multiple choice by importance	List of characteristics
The Market is exploring whether being in a different location would support its growth and encourage you to visit more. Please rank the options using each ranking only ONCE, with 1 being the MOST desirable to 5 being the LEAST desirable.	Single select multiple choice grid	A waterfront location (e.g. East End Reserve, Ngāmotu Beach) A park in the central city A different central city location (e.g. a precinct including Currie Street, King Street etc) Staying at Huatoki Plaza A longer term, purpose built space as the most popular fifth choice
Do you have any other location suggestions or any other thoughts about the locations above?	Free text	
What is the best Farmers' Market you've been to and why?	Free text	
Would you like to share anything else with us?	Free text	
If you are a food producer or grower and want to discuss or revisit selling at the market, please tell us about your product and your email so we can get in touch	Free text	

## Appendix 2: Long list of locations

The longlist of locations below were suggested in the project initiation workshop, through further ideation activity and includes all locations considered by the project but not progressed

Location	Owner	Votes	Requirements			
			Parking	Toilets	All-weather option	Family friendly
East End Reserve	NPDC	3	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Puke Ariki Landing	NPDC	2	Yes	No	No	Yes
Pukekura Park (Band Room near Rogan Street)	NPDC	5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Rogan Street / Pukekura Raceway	NPDC	2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Downtown car park	NPDC	1	Yes	No	Yes	No
Inglewood Train Station	NPDC	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Huatoki Tennis Club	NPDC	1	Yes	No	No	Yes
Netball Courts at Waiwhakaiho	NPDC	1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Brooklands Park, near Zoo and Envirohub	NPDC	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Octavius Place Reserve / Tasman Social Club	NPDC	1	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No
Kawaroa Park	NPDC	1	Yes	No	Maybe	Yes
The Mill Building / car park	Private	2	Yes	No	Maybe	No
Centre City carpark / rooftop	Private	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Seaside Market (path under trees)	Private	1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Out of town - e.g. Beach Road	Private	1	Yes	No	No	No
Cool stores at Port Taranaki	Private	1	Yes	No	Maybe	No
Fitzroy Heights in Merrilands	Private	1	Yes	No	Not known	No
North Taranaki Sport & Rec, Waitara	Community Org	1	Yes	Yes	Not known	Yes
Schools in general	Schools	1	Yes	Unknown	Not known	Yes
Central School	Schools	2	No	Unknown	Not known	Yes
Community halls	NPDC	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

An email was sent to Central School, however it was not included as an option for community engagement as no response had been received by the survey launch of 12 July. Since then, the Principal of the school has responded and is open to exploring this option with the Market Board.

## Appendix 3: Demographics and home location of survey respondents

### Respondents' profile: Home suburb and household composition

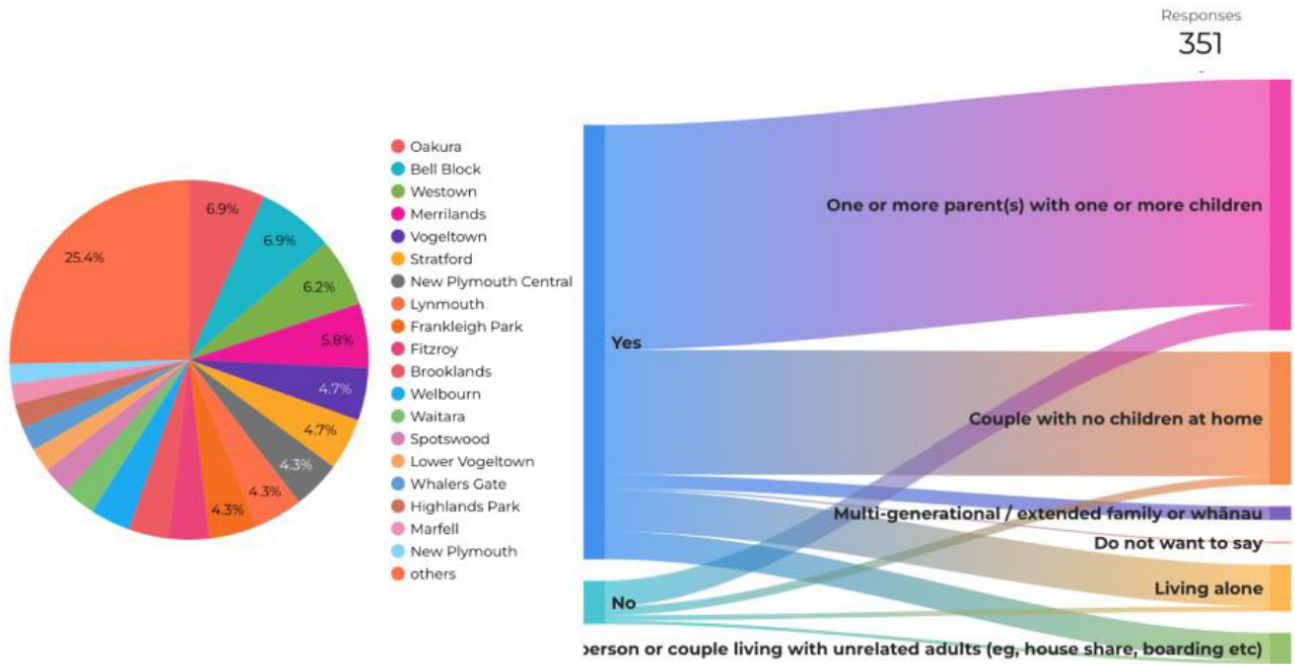


Figure 6: Charts showing the demographics and home suburb of respondents (Source: Taranaki Farmers' Market 2023 Community Survey)