



THU., SEP 27, 2007



Wisconsin State Journal



High Today: 71
FULL FORECAST



TEMPORARY
DELIVERY
STOP

[FRONT PAGE](#)
[LOCAL](#)
[SPORTS](#)
[OPINION](#)
[COLUMNS](#)
[ENTERTAINMENT](#)
[BUSINESS](#)
[BLOGS](#)
[FORUMS](#)

[del.icio.us](#)
[Digg](#)
[Reddit](#)
[Yahoo!](#)
[Google](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Email](#)
[Print](#)

THU., SEP 27, 2007 - 12:07 AM

Downtown has growing pains

By **DEBORAH ZIFF** 608-252-6120
dziff@madison.com

The state of State Street is strong, says a study by a local business group.

But Downtown Madison is experiencing growing pains -- regional competition, condo developments and a new check on Downtown bars. And in the study, the Downtown Madison Market Analysis, the authors make suggestions on how State Street can grow smoothly and remain a Madison mecca.

Downtown Madison Inc. asked UW-Extension to conduct the study because the group wanted to better understand who Downtown customers are and pinpoint holes in retail or service.

ADVERTISEMENT

"To keep our central district healthy, you need the right business mix," said DMI president Susan Schmitz.

READER'S CHOICE

What do you want
to see on tomorrow's
front page?

Wisconsin tree farmer
continues efforts despite fires
and droughts.

All types of alcohol raise
breast cancer risk, researchers
say

New-homes sales fall to
lowest level in seven years.

Man sues over bone
transplant linked to body parts
scam.

[CURRENT RESULTS](#)

[Discuss today's options](#)

Wisconsin State Journal

ADVERTISEMENT

LINKS

- [How state street stacks up](#)
- [Lampert Smith: Bad timing, bad location for Madhatters](#)

The study was paid for by Madison Central Business Improvement District and the city of Madison. The information will become part of a broader DMI program focusing on

"retention, expansion and recruitment " for Downtown businesses, Schmitz said.

Now armed with demographics and buyer data from the study, umbrella business groups like DMI have the tools to guide business owners toward strategic decisions.

But part of State Street 's lure is also its primary challenge. Because it isn 't a traditional mall, one person or group cannot dictate where stores are placed, making a vision for the future of Downtown nearly impossible to implement.

"The challenge we have in our Downtown versus a major mall is you have separate property owners, " Schmitz said. "It 's pretty hard to say Mr. and Mrs. X, this is what you need to put in your space. ' "

The study area is a 1-square-mile region bounded by Park Street, Lake Mendota, Blair Street, Lake Monona, Regent Street and Proudfit Street.

The survey 's authors identified three major challenges facing Downtown: growing regional retail competition, a suburban office market and negative public perceptions. These perceptions range from "there 's no parking " to "no one lives Downtown, " said Mary Carbine, executive director at the Business Improvement District.

The authors recommended that Downtown focus on commercial niches to reach four key consumer groups: Downtown employees, Downtown residents, college students and visitors.

The study didn 't identify a need for a grocery store because a second Willy Street Co-op location is planned to open in Metropolitan Place Phase II at North Broom and West Mifflin streets.

But there does need to be a focus on eclectic and local stores, Schmitz said. "Not the same as you would find in malls, " she said. "We need to give people a reason to come Downtown. "

State Street could also benefit from clustering stores that complement each other and match clientele who frequent those areas. For instance, a concentration of home stores, gifts, dining, and arts and entertainment on the Capitol Square and the 100 and 200 blocks of State Street might be successful in reaching condo residents and Downtown office workers, according to the study.

The study also looked at five "peer communities " to learn from similar downtowns. Matt Kures, one of the study 's authors, stressed that Madison shouldn 't try to morph into one of these cities but could learn from things these communities are doing right. For instance, some cities have developed successful niches around home furnishings and apparel.

Still, Madison remains incredibly vibrant, which was clear when Kures called other cities and they told him "we study Madison. "

CLIP CASH, WIN BIG!

*Play Clip & Win.
Coming soon in the
Wisconsin State Journal.*

clip & win



Wisconsin State Journal

MOST VIEWED

1 comment : add a comment	
Peon Forumite Joined: 03/10/2005 Total posts: 63	How about a common sense addition of stores for daily needs? That would make it unnecessary to burn gas, time and money, to the nearest suburban mall, for something as simple as underwear or towels! Money would stay Downtown! What a concept!

- [Packers: Morency's true test comes Thursday](#)
- [Packers: Favre terrible in the Twin Cities? Not anymore](#)
- [Union House Tavern to close](#)
- [Panel widens Ziegler conflict of interest probe](#)
- [Brewers: Not cool at all](#)

CONTACTS

- [Reader services](#)
- [Temporary delivery stop](#)
- [Guide to getting in the paper](#)
- [Reach Staff](#)
- [E-mail editor Ellen Foley](#)
- [Want to work here?](#)

Copyright © 2007 Wisconsin State Journal

For comments about this site, contact Anjuman Ali, interactive editor, aali@madison.com



How State Street stacks up

In a study chartered by Downtown Madison Inc., UW-Extension examined five of Madison's peer communities to identify Downtown Madison's opportunities and threats. Each community was chosen because of similarity in size (with the exception of Austin), presence of a major university and in many cases because it is home to the state capital. Downtown districts were designated by the respective communities.



Madison

Population 223,389*



Ann Arbor, Mich.

Population 113,206*



Austin, Texas

Population 709,893*



Boise, Idaho

Population 198,638*



Boulder, Colo.

Population 91,481*



Lincoln, Neb.

Population 241,167*

Description

The main thoroughfare of Downtown Madison — from State Street to the Capitol Square — remains vibrant. But the area is constantly changing. The latest: a freshly passed alcohol density plan and proliferation of condos.

Downtown Ann Arbor is intertwined with the University of Michigan, home to approximately 40,000 students. Ann Arbor has been successful in creating an environment with equal amounts retail, bars, restaurants and service.

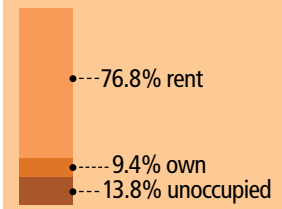
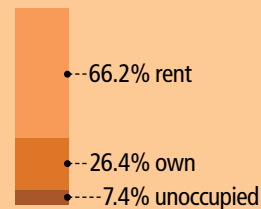
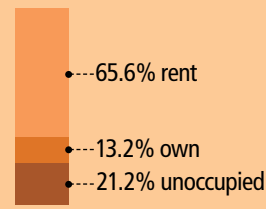
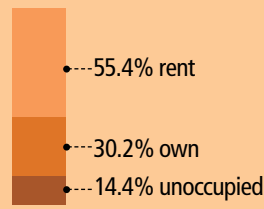
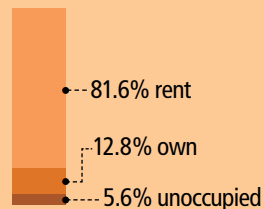
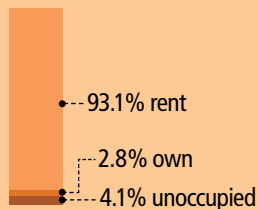
Although Austin is larger than Madison, it has important similarities: home to the state flagship university, the state capital and a progressive culture. Eight schools in the area means 80,000 students live there. Austinites have adopted the unofficial motto "Keep Austin Weird."

Boise is the largest city in Idaho with a blossoming downtown retail district and a robust business presence, even though few people live downtown. Boise State University is located a few miles outside of downtown. It takes 13 minutes to walk the whole downtown.

The downtown retail district is focused around the pedestrian mall on Pearl Street. The University of Colorado-Boulder lies about one mile from downtown with a small commercial district of its own, so college students do not rank among the most important consumer segments.

Lincoln, which is the hub of state and county government and home to the main campus of the University of Nebraska, has developed a performing arts niche. O Street, the traditional retail corridor, targets college students and has a concentration of bars.

Downtown housing



Business mix

85 percent locally owned, 5 percent national franchises, 10 percent nonprofit/government/cultural

About half franchise and half locally owned businesses.

If you remove fast food restaurants, only five of the remaining stores are national chains, according to some estimates.

Downtown Boise is not home to many national chains

85 percent locally owned

Abundance of locally owned businesses.

Madison could learn ...

Ann Arbor's downtown has two retail clusters, one focused on student needs and one targeting the general public. The two are connected by a transitional retail corridor.

Austin has successfully integrated its identity as a "green," socially conscious community into its business-recruitment strategy. National chains who identify themselves with this ethos are drawn there.

Downtown Boise has a developing women's apparel niche, something that distinguishes it from the nearby shopping mall.

Boulder has actively attempted to attract families downtown by integrating street-level entertainment. The result is a unique environment.

Lincoln has a large downtown movie theater, filling a major need for the college-age consumer segment and creating an anchor for the entertainment niche downtown.