

Comparable City Downtowns

This section compares the downtown business mix of a sample of communities that serve similar market segments as the Superior BID. Communities selected include those with similar population and distance from major metropolitan centers. They were also selected based on having an economically vibrant business district.

In order to effectively consider Superior BID development options and strategies, it is useful to explore ideas and strategies that comparable communities have used. The data and analysis in this section can be combined with the analysis throughout this report to assist in defining opportunities that make market sense for the Superior BID.

Identification of Comparison Communities

A set of comparison communities were identified as places with vibrant downtowns and having somewhat similar market segments as in Superior. Similar to Superior, these communities are also in transition in the development of business district organizations. All are working on developing specific economic goals. The following initial criteria were used to derive the comparable communities:

- Overall city population between 20,000 and 40,000
- Proximity to a larger city (population around 100,000)
- Remoteness from major metropolitan regions (population 300,000 or greater)
- Strong local economy and downtown
- Boarder community with another state

The communities in this section include:

- Winona, Minnesota
- De Pere, Wisconsin
- Moorhead, Minnesota

Other comparable communities that were identified for possible future analysis include:

- LaCrosse, Wisconsin
- Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin
- Hayward, Wisconsin
- Racine, Wisconsin

Winona, Minnesota

Winona, Minnesota is known as the “Island City” due to its location along the Mississippi River about 25 miles from LaCrosse, Wisconsin. The early days of logging and milling in the downtown have given way to government employment and office and retail businesses. Winona also has over one hundred sites on the National Register of Historic Places and is home to Winona State University.



Trade Area Data:

	Downtown	1-Mile	3-Mile
Population	683	13,001	26,929
Median HH Income	\$17,753	\$36,950	\$42,586
Households	405	5,046	10,414
Housing Units	437	5,332	10,961
Units Owned	16.5%	51.4%	60.0%
Units Rented	76.2%	43.2%	35.1%
Units Vacant	7.3%	5.4%	5.0%

All numbers are 2007 forecasts based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI.

Major Colleges/Universities:

- Winona State University (8,000 students)
- St. Mary's College (5,500 students)

Types of Consumers Attracted to Downtown:

Downtown Winona businesses rely on other local businesses, niche shoppers and downtown residents. Niche shops provide a destination for visitors attracted to the cultural and historic aspects of the city. With nearly 20 percent of the population of downtown Winona aged 20-24 years old, students provide much of the foot traffic for the district coffee shops and restaurants.

Attractions and Institutions that Draw People Downtown:

Winona is known for its natural beauty and way of life that is tied to the history of the river. Many large festivals and events are held throughout the year, drawing visitors to the downtown area. Some examples of major events are:

- Great River Shakespeare Festival - Repertory Theater event, 7,000 attend
- Sidewalk Sale - organized by the Historical Downtown Business Group
- Steamboat Days
- Warrior Sports (WSU) - attendance brings potential customers
- Historic Buildings - over 100 historic sites in Winona

Downtown Residential Mix

The downtown is characterized by retail and office space with apartment living upstairs. It tends to exclude single family homes. The downtown is affordable and attractive to college age students and seniors.

Economic Development Strategies

- Chamber of Commerce offers business and networking benefits to members
- Historical downtown business group organizes events to attract business
- Recent revision of the Comprehensive Plan includes downtown and riverfront development.
 - Riverfront development includes a mix of open space, recreation, urban living and some industrial with an emphasis on providing public access to the water.
 - Downtown redevelopment strives to open up downtown to river access, preserve historic character and increase culture and arts in downtown. The plan also suggests the need for improved street furniture and façade and sign improvements.

Retail Mix

The natural environment surrounding Winona has benefited the downtown business area. Developable land surrounding Winona is restricted due to the Mississippi River and the high bluffs around the city, leading to a low rate of land intensive chain stores. These conditions have created a steady climate and low competition for locally run retail and office businesses.

Establishments in the downtown area include two grocers, a hardware store and other businesses such as restaurants and bars.

Winona Business Mix Environment: Retail Summary

Businesses	Downtown		1-Mile Radius		3-Mile Radius	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Home Improvement	3	1.6%	12	1.6%	25	1.8%
General Merchandise	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	8	0.6%
Food Stores	2	1.0%	9	1.2%	25	1.8%
Auto Dealers, Gas, Aftermarket	2	1.0%	14	1.9%	37	2.7%
Apparel & Accessory	4	2.1%	8	1.1%	17	1.3%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	2	1.0%	7	0.9%	17	1.3%
Eating & Drinking Places	12	6.2%	40	5.3%	80	5.9%
Miscellaneous Retail	17	8.8%	47	6.3%	74	5.5%
Total Businesses	192	100.0%	750	100.0%	1,354	100.0%
Total Employees	1,733		7,464		17,883	
Total Residents	683		13,001		26,929	
Daytime/Nighttime Ratio (Employee/Resident)	2.54		0.57		0.66	

All numbers are 2007 predictions based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI

De Pere, Wisconsin

De Pere has a strong sense of community identity that is based on its location along the Fox River. While the river divides the city into East and West De Pere, residents of the community feel that the city is culturally closely tied together.

De Pere is adjacent to Green Bay and therefore actually acts as a bedroom community for area commuters. The downtown has been created as a specialty market that caters to niche retail customers. De Pere is home to St. Norbert College and the presence of students seasonally impacts the population of the city.



Trade Area Data

	Downtown	1-Mile	3-Mile
Population	648	9,091	45,171
Households	360	3,326	17,557
Median HH Income	\$45,752	\$57,319	\$63,741
Housing Units	388	3,476	18,264
Units Owned	45.9%	66.1%	64.5%
Units Rented	46.9%	29.6%	31.6%
Units Vacant	7.2%	4.3%	3.9%

All numbers are 2007 projections based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI

Major Colleges/Universities:

- St. Norbert College (2,000 students)

Types of Consumers Attracted to Downtown

East De Pere tends to attract shoppers with the establishment of a men's store, children's book store, a flower shop and a popular restaurant. Most of the consumers on the east side are either parents with children or tourists.

West De Pere caters more to the adjacent college population through a business mix of bars, coffee shops, restaurants and sandwich shops. There are a number of professionals in the area, such as an architecture studio and financial service firms.

Attractions and Institutions that Draw People Downtown

- Celebrate De Pere Festival - annual Memorial Day event that draws 20,000.
- Brown County Fair - a 4-5 day event which draws 27,000 attendees.
- Taste of Wine and Beer in De Pere - a weekend event draws about 2,000 annually
- Corn Roast - July festival held by the Chamber, draws 300-800 corn eaters

Downtown Residential Mix

The housing stock consists mainly of single family homes with some apartment living above shops that tend to often be used by shop owners. Student housing is found both in apartments and in single family conversions. There is also a new assisted living home for the elderly situated across the street from a redeveloped block of retail establishments.

Economic Development Strategies

- Member of Wisconsin's Main Street program and benefits from resources made available through the program.
- Two TIF districts, one on each side of the river to help spur investment from contractors and builders and assist in the redevelopment of the historic downtowns.
- While there is no formal downtown business group or organization, some downtown business owners have joined together to create an informal organization called Destination De Pere. This group strives to work together to coordinate downtown events and promotions.
- Revolving loan fund to help small business owners.
- A more appealing looking downtown will be revealed after completion of the Claude Allouez Bridge in fall 2008, creating a vision of the downtown as an inviting place for commerce, living and investment.

Retail Mix

De Pere experienced high vacancy rates (almost as high as 80 percent) during the late 1990s, due to increased regional retail pressure. Since that time, De Pere has seen an increase in business interest in the downtown area and currently has nearly a 95 percent occupancy rate. St. Norbert College employs about 900 people in the downtown district and Humana houses 350 of its 2,300 workers in the downtown area.

De Pere Business Mix Environment: Retail Summary

Businesses	Downtown		1-Mile Radius		3-Mile Radius	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Home Improvement	1	0.6%	3	0.8%	23	1.0%
General Merchandise	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	15	0.7%
Food Stores	4	2.6%	10	2.7%	47	2.1%
Auto Dealers, Gas, Aftermarket	2	1.3%	6	1.6%	48	2.2%
Apparel & Accessory	4	2.6%	9	2.4%	38	1.7%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	4	2.6%	8	2.1%	61	2.8%
Eating & Drinking Places	19	12.2%	40	10.7%	139	6.3%
Miscellaneous Retail	11	7.1%	23	6.2%	109	4.9%
Total Businesses	156		373		2,216	
Total Employees	1,408		3,910		40,661	
Total Residents	648		9,091		45,171	
Daytime/Nighttime Ratio (Employee/Resident)	2.17		0.43		0.90	

All numbers are 2007 predictions based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI

Moorhead, Minnesota

Moorhead, Minnesota is situated across the Red River from Fargo, North Dakota.

Moorhead is a border city due to the river and also the state boundary and is the most closely



matched comparison community to Superior. The community strives to develop the riverfront as a cultural and social focal point for redevelopment while at the same time preserving and strengthening the historic and cultural character of the city.

Trade Area Data:

	Downtown	1-Mile	3-Mile
Population	683	15,359	85,993
Households	405	6,269	36,189
Median HH Income	\$17,753	\$31,778	\$42,155
Housing Units	446	5,332	10,961
Units Owned	40.0%	40.0%	52.5%
Units Rented	54.5%	53.2%	42.6%
Units Vacant	5.5%	6.8%	5.0%

All numbers are 2007 projections based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI.

Major Colleges/Universities:

- Minnesota State College Moorhead (7,600)
- Concordia College (2,800)
- Minnesota State Community & Tech College (1,600)

Types of Consumers Attracted to Downtown:

Moorhead contains a high percentage of college age residents which allows businesses to cater to this demographics' particular needs. New retail development in the downtown area has helped to provide student friendly services. A series of specialty shops provide niche shopping for downtown residents and visitors.

Attractions and Institutions that Draw People Downtown:

- Farmers Market - introduction of the market has drawn regular customers to the downtown area.
- River Arts Fest - a growing event which draws people to the riverfront.
- Scandinavian Fest - an annual festival celebrating the social history of the area.

Downtown Residential Mix

The large percentage of rental units shows that much of the downtown housing market is dedicated to the student population. Recently developed portions of downtown provide a mix of new and older residences which offer a variety of rental rates. The surrounding neighborhoods also provide converted housing for student living and single family homes for new and younger families. This recent development has brought in new schools and regional retail establishments as well.

Economic Development Strategies

Recent years have seen an increased effort in revitalizing the downtown district.

- A recently completed comprehensive plan has set goals and established a source for the community vision.
- Downtown Community Partnership (DCP) provides a network for local business owners.
- TIF district helps focus funds to create buy-in from business owners and developers.
- State and local assistance in the form of a rotating loan fund have assisted property owners in improving their buildings and has spurred infill development.
- Recent river improvement projects have improved the downtown district of Moorhead. Viking Park and the Hjemkomst Center, designed around the reproduction of a Viking ship, is the centerpiece of the riverfront improvement.

Retail Mix

A unique feature of downtown Moorhead is an indoor shopping mall located at the heart of the city. The mall provides ample free parking and houses many of the city offices. The mall also contains a diner and pharmacy which cater to the elderly population. Aside from the mall, a series of specialty shops provide niche shopping and retail, and big box shopping can be found just to the east of downtown.

Moorhead Business Mix Environment: Retail Summary

Businesses	Downtown		1-Mile Radius		3-Mile Radius	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Home Improvement	2	1.5%	14	1.1%	61	1.5%
General Merchandise	1	0.7%	3	0.2%	14	0.3%
Food Stores	3	2.2%	15	1.2%	75	1.8%
Auto Dealers, Gas, Aftermarket	3	2.2%	15	1.2%	86	2.1%
Apparel & Accessory	7	5.1%	24	1.9%	39	0.9%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	2	1.5%	31	2.4%	97	2.3%
Eating & Drinking Places	10	7.4%	57	4.5%	173	4.1%
Miscellaneous Retail	9	6.6%	64	5.0%	212	5.1%
Total Businesses	136		1,276		4,180	
Total Employees	1,559		18,423		66,023	
Total Residents	683		15,359		85,993	
Daytime/Nighttime Ratio (Employee/Resident)	2.28		1.20		0.77	

All numbers are 2007 predictions based on 2000 Census data, provided by ESRI

Conclusions

Some common themes that appear throughout the comparable cities include:

- Businesses, such as coffee shops and restaurants, that cater to the foot traffic of the college age population.
- Niche and specialty shops that are attractive to downtown residents and visitors and focus on the cultural and historical character of the community.
- Are striving to utilize river or water front areas as community focal points.
- Rental units and apartments found in the downtown district provide housing opportunities for the student and elderly populations.
- Informal downtown business organizations, groups and/or networks that work to coordinate downtown events and promotions