



Fond du Lac Business Owner Survey Results

In order to better understand the conditions and concerns of business owners in downtown Fond du Lac, a survey was conducted to collect comprehensive business information about needs and opportunities, business and workforce data, and market and marketing data. The following section provides a summary of the responses collected.



Downtown Fond du Lac

Needs and Opportunities Assessment

This portion of the report identifies the challenges and needs of downtown businesses as well as identifying the Main Street tools most beneficial to business owners. The survey also attempts to gain insight into the qualities of the downtown business climate and location.

- Respondents found business challenges to be:
 - Major Challenges:*
 - Insufficient parking
 - Local Competition
 - Minor Challenges:*
 - Out of town competition
 - Expensive employee wages or benefits
 - Vandalism
- Respondents felt they needed information or assistance with:
 - Advertising or marketing (45%)
 - Business market analysis (31%)
 - Customer service or hospitality (27%)
 - Building improvements (27%)
 - Internet or E-Commerce (26%)
 - Business planning (22%)
 - Financial management (21%)

- Surveyed business owners found the following existing Main Street products and services useful
 - Highly Useful:*
 - Information sharing
 - Downtown business directories, brochures, maps
 - Useful:*
 - Advertising and marketing of Main Street district as a shopping destination
 - Special event coordination

- Surveyed business owners felt the following proposed Main Street products would be useful:
 - Individual or group business training
 - Cooperative advertising program
 - Cooperative insurance program
 - Website or Wi-Fi connection

- In relation to the business climate, a majority of the respondents agreed with the following statements:
 - Local police and fire protection are outstanding
 - I feel safe downtown, even at night
 - I always try to buy products and services locally
 - I always direct customers to other downtown businesses
 - I seek ways to cooperate with complimentary downtown businesses
 - My advertising helps my business
 - My business is open when people want to shop
 - Employees of my business show great customer service
 - Downtown Fond du Lac is an excellent place to have a business

Fewer, but still many, respondents agreed with:

 - The existing downtown business mix helps my business
 - The look and feel of downtown helps my business
 - My façade draws in customers

- An overwhelming majority of respondents reported they are satisfied with the present location of their business. Respondents noted the following reasons why they felt they had a quality business location:
 - Centrally located, heart of downtown
 - Easy to find
 - Accessible by public transportation
 - Convenient for customers
 - Good visibility

Business owners also mentioned a few negative aspects of having a downtown business. They include:

 - Poor traffic
 - Problem with parking
 - Noise issues
 - Owner conflicts

- A majority of respondents reported they have no current plans to reduce or expand business operation. They also reported neither they, nor the building owner, are considering any building improvement projects.

Business Characteristics

Information gathered in this section of the survey focuses on tenancy, duration of ownership and parking availability.

- 47 percent of respondents have operated their business for more than 20 years. Of these, the majority have owned their business for more than 11 years.
- More than half of respondents currently own the space their business is located.
- The vast majority of respondents, 90 percent, claim their customers utilize street parking within one block of the business entrance.
- Likewise, 86 percent of respondents and their employees park in public or private lots within one block of the business entrance.

*see the Considerations sections for more discussion on this data

Market and Marketing Data

The purpose of this portion of the survey is to collect data regarding store hours, busiest shopping times, sources of advertising, complimentary and competitive businesses, and target markets. By analyzing this information, we can determine what changes are possible in the planning of downtown activities and economic development to improve foot traffic, success among businesses, and to increase the overall economic vitality of the downtown area.

Customer/Client Traffic

- Surveyed business owners feel the busiest times of the week are:
 - Monday – Saturday 11a.m. – 5 p.m.
 - Friday 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
 Business owners also do not feel they need to increase or modify current store hours.
- The three busiest months of the year for the surveyed businesses are:
 - October
 - November
 - December

- Respondents felt certain community events increased their business's foot traffic or sales volume. Fall Festival and Girls on the Town garnered the most responses. Note the high level of *none* responses.

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Girls on the Town	16	16.33	
Farmers Market	10	10.20	
July Sidewalk Sale	14	14.29	
Fall Festival	29	29.59	
Tick or Treat	4	4.08	
Holiday Parade of Lights	6	6.12	
Holiday Open House	5	5.10	
None	55	56.12	
Other	1	1.02	
Missing	6	6.12	

- A majority of respondents described their target market as:
 - Female
 - Ages 25-44
 - Annual household income \$50,000 - \$74,999

Advertising

- The majority of respondents reported they do not utilize any radio advertising. But, among those who do, the most popular outlets were:
 - KFIZ 107
 - WFDL 97.7
 - KFIZ 1450

Over 75 percent of respondents reported they do not use television advertising, the remaining percentage was equally distributed among the local channels.

- As expected, advertising dollars are generally spent on local publications. Below is the detailed break down of the respondent's use of each outlet. The numbers indicate most respondents utilize more than one publication.

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Action	55	56.12	
Advertiser			
The Reporter	52	53.06	
Assoc. of Commerce	5	5.10	
Newsletter			
Winnebago	7	7.14	
B2B			
Real estate guides	6	6.12	
Java News	6	6.12	
Oshkosh	6	6.12	
Northwestern			
Sheboygan	3	3.06	
Press			
Other1	12	12.24	
Other2	7	7.14	
Other3	5	5.10	
None	21	21.43	
Missing	9	9.18	

Competition

- A majority of business owners responded the following traits helped in a large degree to make their business more competitive:
 - Service
 - Quality
 To a lesser degree, respondents noted:
 - Price
 - Selection
 - Hours
 - Location

- Respondents would like to see the following businesses categories developed downtown:

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Women's apparel	24	24.49	
Shoe store	5	5.10	
Specialty gift store	22	22.45	
Sporting goods store	13	13.27	
Hobby/toy store	3	3.06	
Discount store	16	16.33	
Hearth & home shop	20	20.41	
Ethnic eatery	20	20.41	
Grocery/pharmacy	30	30.61	
Lotions & potions shop	14	14.29	
Other	17	17.35	
Missing	31	31.63	

- Respondents would like to see the following community assets developed:

Most Wanted Community Assets

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Expanded riverfront trail	23	23.47	
Riverfront cleanup	34	34.69	
Outdoor ice rink	12	12.24	
Expanded public parking	47	47.96	
Expanded green space	27	27.55	
Farmers Market pavilion	28	28.57	
Public art	19	19.39	
Public restrooms	15	15.31	
None	4	4.08	
Other	8	8.16	
Missing	18	18.37	

Considerations

Using the information we have gathered from the business owner surveys, this section will attempt to identify trends, attitudes and behaviors which present the downtown community with critical needs or potential opportunities. In no way does this section intend to replace local knowledge and expertise, instead, it is intended to direct your knowledge and utilize your expertise in the most efficient way possible.

- Throughout the needs and opportunities section respondents consistently mentioned advertising and marketing as a need. Closely related to the need for advertising assistance is the need for information dissemination to potential customers. To achieve this, business owners desire the ability to promote the downtown as a shopping destination through directories, brochures and maps.
- Although assistance with building improvements was listed as a critical need, the overwhelming majority of respondents say they have no intent to carry out improvements. Given these two responses, it may be beneficial to explore the barriers preventing business and building owners from making aesthetic and functional upgrades.
- The ownership data in the Business Characteristics section implies downtown businesses maintain strong local and historic community ties – given their duration of ownership and operation. These ties can be utilized to foster participation in downtown efforts, as well as help shape Fond du Lac's sense of place.
- The parking information presented in this report seems to paint a contradictory picture of downtown parking availability. Consistently throughout the survey results we see insufficient parking listed as a critical challenge and need. On the other hand, the data in the Business Characteristics section shows approximately 90 percent of customers and approximately 86 percent of employees are able to park within one block of the business entrance. If this were true, it would appear there is an abundance of convenient parking in downtown Fond du Lac. In deference to these differing opinions and results, it may be beneficial to look further into the parking issue.
- In the section referring to Main Street services considered useful to downtown business owners, nearly 50 percent of respondents felt retail and special event coordination is a useful service. This information, coupled with the 56 percent of respondents who felt none of the current community events increased foot traffic for their businesses, may indicate a need and an opportunity to provide community events targeted at attracting customers downtown.
- The responses to which business categories would be beneficial to the downtown environment, as well as the statements made about the downtown business climate and location, could be used in a future business recruitment plan. Recruitment should also bear in mind the target market identified by this survey.

The attached appendices contain the preliminary business owner survey results and a condensed item analysis report.