



## Portage Consumer Survey Results

In order to better understand the conditions and concerns of consumers in Portage, a survey was undertaken to collect comprehensive consumer information about when, where and why respondents shop.\* The survey also explored consumer preferences and characteristics. The following section provides a summary of the survey responses collected in 2005.

*\*This summary is based on a consumer survey completed in 2005. The original surveys are no longer available. This section presents the summary data still available.*



Downtown Portage

### When, Where, and Why They Shop

This portion of the survey explores how often and for what reason respondents visit, or do not visit, downtown Portage, what hours they shop, and the distance from home they are willing to travel to shop.

- According to respondents, the most typical shopping times for non-grocery items are:
  - Monday – Friday after 5:00 pm
  - Saturday and Sunday before 2:00 pm

Given the shopping hours reported, it is likely much of non-grocery shopping occurs outside of downtown, where stores are open later and on weekends. These findings indicate the importance of extended hours of operation and matching actual store hours with consumer behavior.

- If extended hours were offered, respondents said they would be most likely to shop for non-grocery items during these extended hours:
  - Friday after 7:00 pm
  - Saturday and Sunday afternoon

If shopping is occurring outside of downtown due to limited hours of operation, the above times may provide opportunities for extending business hours with the assurance of at least some customer base

- The survey found dinner is the most popular meal to eat out with approximately 43 percent of respondents eating dinner out at least once a week. Lunch trails only slightly with 30 percent of respondents eating lunch out at least once a week. Breakfast garnered only 17 percent.
- The survey also explores the average cost of meals when dining out.
  - 40 percent said they spend \$5.00 to \$9.99 once a week
  - 21 percent said they spend \$10.00 - \$14.99 once a week
  - 5.5 percent of respondents said they spend more than \$15.00 once a week
- When asked about movie going habits, 23 percent of respondents said they go to a movie theater at least once a month. On the other hand, approximately 31 percent of respondents rent movies for home viewing at least once a month.
- The following chart shows the percent attendance (for the last 12 months) of local community festivals and events. Overwhelmingly the most popular event is the Canal Days and Taste of Portage.

Event Attendance		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Festival of flower	17	6.20
Best Fest	47	17.15
Canal Days	102	37.23
Arts Walk	37	13.50
Concert in the Park	61	22.26
Sidewalk Sales Day	53	19.34
Taste of Portage	97	35.40
Pumkinfest	49	17.88
Living Windows	45	16.42
Historic Homes Tour	23	8.39
Holiday Parade	72	26.28
Yesterfest	18	6.57
Cookie Walk	14	5.11
Portage Alumni Basketball Tournament	29	10.58
Other	18	6.57
None	56	20.44
<b>Missing</b>	42	15.33

- Respondents were asked if they came to downtown Portage during a typical week to do the following; the responses were:
  - Passing through – 66%
  - Dining Out – 26%
  - Non-grocery Retail – 25%
  - Work – 21%
  - Personal Care / Professional Services – 13%

- When visiting downtown, 92 percent of respondents parked either on the street or in a public lot, and 87 percent said they are able to park within one block of their destination.
- Respondents were asked how far they live from work. The responses were:
  - Under 5 minutes – 13%
  - 5 to 10 minutes – 14%
  - 11 to 15 minutes – 12%
  - 16 to 20 minutes – 11%
  - Over 20 min – 18%
  - Work at home or retired – 25%
- Respondents were also asked how far they live from downtown Portage:
  - Under 5 minutes – 29%
  - 5 to 10 minutes – 26%
  - 11 to 15 minutes – 20%
  - 16 to 20 minutes – 11%
  - Over 20 min – 7%
  - Live Downtown – 2%

Based on the above responses, approximately 85% of respondents live within 20 minutes of downtown, but, only 50% live within 20 minutes of work. This suggests many area residents and respondents commute out of Portage to work. It may be helpful for local businesses to study the consumer behaviors of the commuter market and develop operating strategies, products and services consistent with the busy lifestyles of commuters.

- Related to the above, 62 percent of respondents said they are most likely to shop near where they live, and 28 percent said they are most likely to shop near their place of employment. As many of the commuters may work in Madison, the availability of shopping near their place of work (in Madison) probably adds regional competition which needs to be considered in the local market. In other words, the availability of big box stores and regional shopping centers in Madison needs to be considered when examining local demand and supply conditions by business type.
- When respondents were asked where they did most of their non-grocery shopping, the results were as follows:
  - 16 percent shop in downtown Portage
  - 54 percent shop in Madison
  - 55 percent shop at Wal-Mart
  - 41 percent shop in Northside Portage (not Wal-Mart)
  - 23 percent shop in Baraboo
 As in many communities, Wal-Mart captures the largest share of local retail consumer expenditures. Also, consistent with the early questions on commuting, an equally large percentage of consumers shop in Madison.

- Respondents were then asked to identify the reason they chose to shop at the above location instead of downtown Portage; overwhelming the responses dealt with better selection and price.

## What Consumers Want

Information gathered in this section of the survey, focuses on the types of stores and services respondents would like to see locate in downtown Portage. It also examines consumer's feelings about housing and amenities in downtown Portage.

- Respondents were asked to list four business types they would like to see locate downtown. Overwhelmingly the response indicated the following:
  - shoe store
  - bakery
  - butcher shop
  - upscale coffee shop
  - hardware store.
- The graph below shows which community assets consumers would like to see developed in Portage. The most popular answers were the Hill Ford Building, the Portage Canal and walking/biking trails.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Bike trails	38	13.87	
Waling trails	44	16.06	
Portage Canal	69	25.18	
Sports facilities	27	9.85	
Wisconsin River	27	9.85	
Hill Ford Buiding	83	30.29	
Expanded 'green space'	15	5.47	
Expanded public parking	30	10.95	
Parking Ramp near theater	18	6.57	
None of these	36	13.14	
Other	37	13.50	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>37.96</b>	

- Respondents were asked if they would consider living downtown: 78 percent said they would not, 17 percent said they did live downtown or had interest in living downtown. Those who had an interest in living downtown were asked what type of housing they would like to live in. The most popular choice was a privately owned, single family home, with two to three bedrooms. *Please refer pages seven through nine in the Condensed Item Analysis Report for more details on preferred styles of downtown homes.*

## Consumer Market Information

This portion of the survey provides information about the make up of Portage's consumer market. Details include demographic information, lifestyle data and recreational activities.

The results of this survey may be skewed, due to the following: approximately 45 percent of the survey respondents are over the age of 55, but, according to 2006 ESRI demographic data, only 25 percent of residents in Portage are over the age of 55. It is important to consider the effect this discrepancy may have had on the data presented.

- Respondents were asked which leisure activities their household participates in. The responses that garnered at least a fifty percent response rate include:
  - Attending Concerts / Shows
  - Computer and Internet
  - Cooking
  - Traveling
  - Gardening
  - Reading for pleasure

*Some of these activities can be supported by independent downtown niche businesses (existing or new businesses). For a full listing of activities noted by respondents, please refer to page eleven in the Condensed Item Analysis Report .*
- The respondents were asked to identify the types of books and magazines most often read in their household. The following are the books and magazines that garnered at least a 30 percent response rate.
  - Cooking, food and wine
  - Health, mind and body
  - Mystery and Thriller
  - Home and garden
  - News
  - Outdoor and nature

*Again, the activities associated with these topics can be supported by independent downtown niche businesses (existing or new businesses). For a full listing of books and magazines please refer to page fifteen in the Condensed Item Analysis Report.*

- The following table summarizes the radio stations most listened to by respondents. Those garnering the highest response rate are WPDR 1350 and the “Other” category.

**Radio listening**

Response	Frequency	Percent	
WPDR 1350	66	24.09	
WDDC 100.1	47	17.15	
WOLX 94.9	60	21.90	
WIBA 101.5	28	10.22	
WZEE Z104	22	8.03	
WBKY 95.9	25	9.12	
Other	80	29.20	
None	13	4.74	
<b>Missing</b>	47	17.15	

- The following table summarizes the publications most read by respondents. The Portage Daily Register and the State Journal are by far the most read.

**Newspaper reading**

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Portage Daily Register	169	61.68	
Shopper Stopper	67	24.45	
State Journal	157	57.30	
Wall Street Journal	4	1.46	
Milwaukee Journal Sentinal	7	2.55	
Baraboo News Republic	3	1.09	
Other	13	4.74	
None	4	1.46	
<b>Missing</b>	25	9.12	

The two previous questions on media can be used to target marketing messages at particular media outlets in order to reach the most consumers. It may be important to further explore the “other” category in the radio station preference question because it received an unusually high response rate. The State Journal’s significance again reflects the importance of considering the Madison market when analyzing market opportunities for retail and services in Portage.

## Considerations

Using the information gathered from the consumer survey, a number of considerations emerge which should be accounted for in downtown Portage's business development efforts.

- Explore the possibility of extending downtown business hours (consistent among businesses); Friday after 7:00 pm and Saturday and Sunday afternoons are possible times for extended hours.
- Develop strategies to capture travelers who pass through downtown, but do not normally stop.
- Recognize the importance of the commuter market, especially those out-commuters who travel to Madison. Develop strategies to appeal to the lifestyles of both outbound and inbound commuters.
- Using the data provided by the survey on consumer preferences, attitudes and potential gaps in the business mix, it may be possible for Portage to begin to formulate strategies for business recruitment to address and fit those preferences and gaps (note the information in this survey is not sufficient to draw any concrete conclusions and is not a substitute for a feasibility study and business plan). Nevertheless, potential gaps in downtown Portage include:
  - shoe store
  - bakery
  - butcher shop
  - upscale coffee shop
  - hardware store.
  - additional lifestyle retail categories including cooking, home/garden, health, and computers

Also consider the proximity of Madison and the competition this larger market presents to existing and new businesses in Portage.

Information from the consumer survey results can be married to the results of the business operators survey in order to identify potential disconnects between consumer needs and business resources. For example, consumer responses dealing with desired extended hours can be matched with business responses to the perceived need and potential for extending business hours.

These considerations are a reflection of those who responded to the survey and not necessarily the entire community population. Accordingly, they should be used to stimulate thinking and supplement the insight of local business and economic development leaders.