



Tomahawk Focus Group Project: Retail Shops



Downtown Tomahawk

Report produced
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Introduction

Located at the southern edge of Wisconsin's Northwoods region, the city of Tomahawk in Lincoln County features scenic vistas overlooking numerous lakes, streams and the Wisconsin River. Over a period of many years, the city has blossomed as one of the more intriguing tourist destinations in the region. Many retail businesses located throughout the city cater to tourists year around. In winter, folks come from as far away as the Chicago area to cross country ski and snowmobile. In summer, people come to Tomahawk for camping, boating, hiking, and many other outdoor activities.

With a population of 3,828, Tomahawk is one of two cities located in mostly rural Lincoln County (City of Merrill, population 10,153). Approximately 53% of the population is female and almost 23% of the population is age 62 or older. Like the rest of Lincoln County and most of Wisconsin, the population is continuing to age fairly rapidly. About 21% of the population consists of school age children (ages 5-19). About 98% of the population classifies themselves as white. The largest minority is Asian (.07%). Household median income is nearly \$34,000.¹



Tomahawk Sidewalk Sale

Background Information; Tomahawk Retail Sector & Shopping Local

Over the past few years, Tomahawk retail stores have experienced a decline in sales to local residents. A recent survey of residents conducted by the Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce and University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County showed that nearly 52% of locals shop five times or less per month in Tomahawk retail establishments (N = 106). Even more alarming, over half of the respondents (52.8%) report spending 10% or less of their shopping dollars in Tomahawk stores.

In late 2005, the Chamber began a marketing campaign to encourage residents to shop locally. The campaign started during the holiday season with radio and newspaper ads and was discussed on the air and in newspaper articles. It

emphasized the importance of shopping locally and discussed research about this issue.

Used by the Chamber to illustrate how shopping locally boosts local economies, a comprehensive study from Maine showed that when a consumer spends \$100 at big box retailers, her purchases generate \$14 in local spending by those retailers. However, that same \$100 spent at locally owned businesses generates about \$45 on average in local spending, or three times more.² Another study tends to confirm that this kind of effect may be quite common. In general, for every \$100 spent in a particular

¹ Total population figures are from US Census, 2004 Estimates. All other data in this section is from US Census 2000.

²Institute for Local Self-Reliance. "Case Study: The Economic Impact of Locally Owned Businesses vs. Chains." (September 2003) <http://www.ilsr.org/>

Austin chain bookstore, only about \$13 was reinvested into the community. For every \$100 spent in locally owned bookstores, \$45 remained in Austin.³

The money spent at local stores is often used to hire other businesses in the community such as contractors, sign makers, web designers, insurance vendors, accountants, and other firms that provide a wide variety of services. Local businesses also use local banks, spend their own profits at other stores within the community, carry a higher percentage of locally made goods, and donate time and money to community groups and organizations.⁴ A study conducted recently in Oregon showed that small local stores contributed on average \$789 per employee to charities in their local communities.⁵ This kind of effect support was also documented in the Maine study.

Economic Impact of Shopping Locally: Other Indicators

Other studies demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, chain stores do not necessarily generate more tax revenue for communities than do local mom and pop businesses. A report outlining a study by TischlerBise done in Barnstable, Massachusetts shows that local Main Street type businesses in that city produce a net annual return of \$326 in tax revenue (i.e. “generates more tax revenue than it costs to service”) per 1,000 square feet while big box stores in that community generated a net annual deficit of \$468 per 1,000 square feet.⁶

There is also much to suggest that money spent in local chain stores would likely have been spent in local mom and pops if the chain did not exist in the given community, further strengthening the argument that a community’s overall vitality to a significant degree depends on how many dollars are expended in local small retail shops. One study suggests that even though local businesses often experience increased sales immediately after a chain store opens in the community – especially in large communities – it is likely that as time passes this trend will be partially reversed, forcing at least some mom and pops to close their doors.⁷ An earlier study done by the same author showed that Iowa mom and pops located within 20 miles of Wal-Mart stores experienced a 25.4% decline in accumulated sales over five years.⁸

Although more studies with regard to the city of Tomahawk need to be undertaken concerning the impacts of local shopping, results from a recent Tomahawk Business Retention and Expansion survey (also done by the Chamber and UW-Extension) and

³ Dan Houston. “Economic Impact Analysis: A Case Study, Local Merchants vs. Chain Retailers. *Livablecity, AIBA, and Civic Economics web report* (December 2002), <http://www.civiceconomics.com/>

⁴ Source: American Independent Business Alliance

⁵ “The Need for Local First Campaigns.” *Business Alliance for Local Living Economics*, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/19930701/3644.html> . Figure includes monetary and in-kind contributions.

⁶ Stacy Mitchell. “Big Box Stores Drain City Revenue, Study Finds.” *The Home Town Advantage Bulletin* (February 2003), <http://www.newrules.org/hta/hta0203.htm>; (study done by TischlerBise)

⁷ Kenneth Stone. “How Do You Deal With the Entry of a New Wal-Mart Supercenter in Your Town?” *Public Management* (March 2005).

⁸ Edward O. Welles. “When Wal-Mart Comes to Town.” *Inc. Magazine* (July 1993); online version located at <http://www.inc.com/magazine/19930701/3644.html>

the shop local questionnaire indicate that local shoppers often choose to frequent big boxes outside the city. They cite various reasons for doing so including but not limited to the convenience of one stop shopping, a lack of selection at some local stores, and for at least some items better prices at big boxes versus local stores. Results of the focus group project described below also tend to reinforce data obtained from those surveys and seem to mirror what is happening in many small communities throughout the country.

Description of Focus Group Project

In April 2006, the Chamber and Extension conducted six focus group sessions with Tomahawk, Lincoln County residents. The purpose of these sessions was to attempt to determine whether citizens from different backgrounds have similar positive experiences when shopping in Tomahawk's retail stores. If consistent themes emerged, the Chamber was hoping to use the information to design a brand for Tomahawk retail stores meant to keep locals shopping in town and, to a lesser degree, to draw non-residents into the city to shop. One focus group consisting of seven women shoppers, ages roughly 30 to 55, took part in the project. Another group consisted of five senior citizens. Another 50 high school seniors (four groups) were also interviewed for the project. Four of the six groups were facilitated by the Lincoln County UW-Extension Community Development educator. The other two groups, both youth, were facilitated by the Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce Executive Director.

Focus group members were asked five questions that were designed to solicit very specific, detailed views primarily about shopping in Tomahawk's retail stores. Grocery and convenience stores were not included in the definition of retail store. Those five questions were:

- ***In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?***

- ***What are the most positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?***

- ***What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?***

- ***Of all the things that we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?***

- ***Is there anything that you would like to add?***

Summary Interpretation of Results

What Makes Shopping in Retail Stores Pleasurable?

One rather dominant and several less prevalent themes or defining characteristics emerged while discussing the question “in your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?” The theme that was most dominant was that pleasurable shopping experiences often emanate from good customer service. Good customer service was essentially defined by participants as salespeople, clerks, and owners being pleasant and personable, easy to find, being knowledgeable about products, walking you to merchandise you want rather than just pointing to an area, creating a comfortable atmosphere in which to shop, and not being overly aggressive. Of the 56 comments that were made related to this question, 21 (38%) referred directly to some aspect of what was considered to be good customer service. Although several youth mentioned good customer service, that topic seemed to be emphasized more by the senior and women participants.



Having a variety of products to choose from, in the opinion of several focus group participants, also makes the retail shopping experience pleasurable. Although this point was brought up in all six groups, it seemed to be emphasized more by youth. Ten direct references (18%) were made to variety of products. Eight of those ten references were made by youth.

Several responses were made suggesting that the right store atmospheres can make the shopping experience more pleasurable. Most of these comments occurred during the senior and women sessions. A total of six comments were made regarding atmosphere. Five of those were mentioned by the seniors and women. Atmosphere was also discussed mostly in negative terms by youth when addressing the third focus group question (see below/most positive features Tomahawk retail have in common).

Other less prevalent but nonetheless important comments were made fairly consistently about pricing (reasonable prices equal pleasurable experience), the ability to socialize while shopping (emphasized primarily by youth but also mentioned by seniors), and convenient store hours.

Most Positive Features Tomahawk Retail Stores Have in Common

With regard to the second question “what are the most positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?” participants emphasized some of the same things they mentioned in response to the first question.

Again, comments about good customer service were frequent. Forty-eight overall comments were made related to this question. Of those, eighteen (38%) referred to good customer service. Adults emphasized this aspect more than youth. A couple comments very accurately summarized what many of the participants were thinking about with regard to Tomahawk retail stores. One person said “businesses are involved in the community. The owners live here – if they don’t have something, they will suggest where I can get it in town. They care more about me than my money.” Another stated “people know me and care about me and why I am there.” A youth participant was pleased with the “environment” [found in stores], the “friendly people,” and the fact that she “could get help with what [she] needs.” Another opined that if people are nice to you, “that makes you want to come back.”

No other dominant patterns emerged. However, it is worth noting that promotional aspects were emphasized quite a bit during the women’s focus group session. Nearly half the comments they made in response to this question (5 of 12) referred to the positive promotional efforts retail stores in Tomahawk, often in partnership with the Chamber, make on a regular basis. The prevalence of such comments may be an indication of group think or it is possible that women of this age group (approximately 30 to 55) pay more attention to such promotions in an effort to reduce household/family expenses.

Several participants, all of them youth, also mentioned that they liked the fact that most of the stores were easy to get to primarily because they are close together and not far from where they live.

What Collective Image Do Tomahawk Retail Stores Convey?

With regard to the third question (“what collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?”), no dominant answer patterns emerged. The closest thing to a dominant response was that Tomahawk retail stores convey a sense of the Northwoods region. Several participants see the effort to promote this image as something to attract tourists. Emphasizing the outdoor attractions in and around the city is a strategy, they seem to feel, that is not meant to appeal to locals. Remaining comments were extremely varied (please see the “Focus Group Participation Feedback” section below for all comments).

What Stands Out as Being the Most Important Subjects Discussed Today?

When asked “of all the things that we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?” a couple senior participants provided ideas for possible brand slogans. One stated “try Tomahawk first.” Another thought “you are important to us” would accurately convey Tomahawk retail stores’ penchant to provide prompt, courteous customer service without being too overbearing. Yet another senior suggested that “we’ve got what you need” could be an effective brand slogan. It is worth noting that the Chamber decided to use the “Try Tomahawk First” slogan in a series of print advertisements.

The women’s focus group reiterated that Tomahawk retail stores, in their view, are mostly known for the good customer service they provide. They also once again

emphasized the promotional efforts that are being conducted by many local retailers in collaboration with the Chamber of commerce. Women focus group members also seemed very aware that many Tomahawk business owners support the community in various ways. A couple youth mentioned this as well. Several women stated that they make a more conscience effort to shop local knowing that some of their dollars will be used to benefit the community.

Youth adamantly stated that they feel retail stores located in Tomahawk cater mostly to either tourists or older generations. Several were upset that in their view clothes shops do not offer styles and brand names that are popular with people their age. Most felt that Tomahawk retailers offer too many products that are either antiques or knick-knacks that they are not interested in purchasing. They also in general emphasized that local stores should be open longer hours and on weekends. But, many of them said that even if stores were open longer they would be unlikely to shop in them because they lack the products that are most in demand by people of their age group.

Several youth participants also felt that locating a fast food restaurant near the heart of town that is open most hours of the day could help draw young locals into some of the city's retail establishments. Taco Bell was mentioned several times. Some also stated that they like the convenience of one stop shopping that big box stores such as Kohls and Wal-Mart often provide. That said, they realize how small retailers can be driven out of business by the big boxes and seemed for the most part to be genuinely concerned that the local economy could be severely damaged under such circumstances.

Focus Group Participant Feedback

Seniors Focus Group

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?
 - Having the merchandise I want
 - Reasonable price
 - The personal service in Tomahawk – I could take dresses home and try them on. If I didn't like them, I could bring them back.
 - Social outing
 - When the clerks are friendly and welcoming
 - When I get treated well... in Rhinelander, people aren't as friendly... I can't find a clerk to help me there
 - In Tomahawk, the clerks walk you over and show you what you are looking for
 - I don't want the merchandise to be old and jumbled together
 - Atmosphere
2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?
 - Friendliness

- Service – people greet me and smile. They also say good-bye and have a nice day.
 - Once, I forgot my money to pay for gas. The clerk told me to go back and get my checkbook. She trusted me.
 - Selection and variety of groceries
 - The fact that they are here.
 - Businesses are involved in the community. The owners live here – if they don't have something, they will suggest where I can get it in town. They care more about me than my money.
 - We have beautiful and wonderful specialty shops with unique items (Standard Mercantile, antiques, Silver Threads).
 - Owners support community organizations.
 - We need to strike a balance between specialty items and what locals need. This is a tricky balance.
 - It's hard not to look at shops as tourist stores.
3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?
- Northwoods motif – bears, logs, fishing, Harleys, deer. Northwoods is in the name of many of the businesses.
 - Friendly and welcoming
 - Tired – I see a flavor of discouragement. We have lost a lot of stores and there is a sort of anxiety and tension. Who is going to close next?
 - Main Street looks unhappy.
 - We no longer have the turnover in tourists that specialty stores depend on.
 - I wish stores were open until 9pm again.
 - I've decided to look here first due to rising gas prices. I just assumed local stores didn't carry what I needed.... I actually found my printer cartridge here! If I hadn't looked, I would never have known!
 - Customer service – clerks smile – I feel they are there to help me. That tells me they want to help me. If they don't have what I want, many offer to order it for me.
 - Try Tomahawk First – possible slogan
 - Maybe you should have a Tomahawk Rewards Program – you're a local, you're important to us, here's a special discount or credit.
4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?
- We need more variety of basics – jeans, tennis shoes, plus size clothing store
 - Try Tomahawk First slogan
 - You are Important to Us slogan
 - Business owners are local and care about us
 - Organizations that ask for donations should be customers
 - Importance on on-going education with what stores do have
 - Overall visual improvement of downtown
 - Gas prices are high and we don't have a lot of traffic congestion

- Construction in Wausau – I don't like change, and the streets have changed there.
- Create a game – Where in Tomahawk is.... And involve kids
- We've Got What You Need slogan
- Small town – trust, knowing who you are dealing with, know where the stores are and can usually find parking

Women's Focus Group

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?
 - Selection
 - Cleanliness
 - Service – clerk availability... someone who is willing to help you
 - Customer service – some who is available, friendly and courteous. Someone who knows where the products are
 - Short lines
 - Proper help
 - Customer friendly – they take things out to your car
 - My Feed Store is top notch and exceptional
 - Attractive inside – displayed well, neat, inviting atmosphere
 - Creative displays – In Scarlet Garden, I am drawn from one place to another. The window draws me into the store, and once I'm in the store, I am drawn from one display to the next.
 - Parking
 - Product turnover – I like to see new things on the shelf

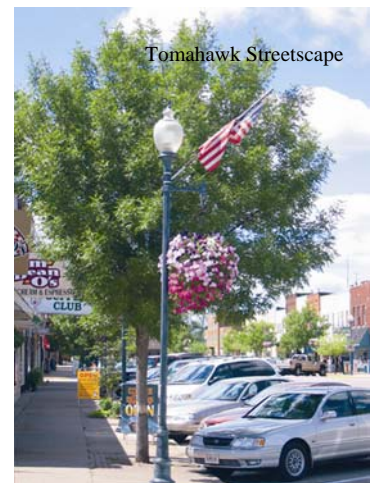
2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?
 - The people who run them
 - People know me and care about me and why I am there
 - Willing to help
 - The stores work well together – if they don't have something I'm looking for, they will send me to another store
 - Punch cards – some people like them and some people don't... they are an added bonus, but people would still shop there without them
 - I like Chamber Bucks
 - I know who the owner is – they are very visible, know me by name and recognize me. I like when the owner is at the store
 - Most advertise locally – the newspaper and radio are informative
 - Stores order things you want – you request it, and they will order it. They are very accommodating
 - Drawback – no one-stop shop locally and no clothing here
 - The shop local campaign has gotten in my head
 - Dollar stores often have the same prices as Wal-Mart

3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?

- Small... little
- Personal
- I go into a store and they know me and ask me about my last visit. They ask, "How did xxx product work out for you?"
- I go into a store and say, wow! This store has what I'm looking for!
- Seasonal giveaways – the newspaper and radio do raffles for things during the holidays
- Businesses work well together – they are not in cut-throat competition
- Pleasing window displays and entrances are welcoming... I feel anticipation of finding something I'll like
- I like the old fashioned signs around town that the Signcrafters did
- I like the lights downtown and the hanging baskets
- There is nothing for the seniors to do downtown... they need a bakery, a place to get groceries, a restaurant
- Supermarkets a good place to walk and socialize
- Convenience – easy to get to

4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?

- Customer service – the personal touch... stores will order things for you
- Keep promoting the local message
- Don't assume stores don't have things
- Stores give to local clubs that my kids belong to
- Our community and businesses always give to the clubs
- Retailers give so much to local community
- People greet you when you walk into a store, it is often the owner... people don't forget the nice-ities
- Commercials have been great



Youth Focus Group #1

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?

- Interesting things to look at
- Sales
- I shop out of necessity – I don't like to shop
- Finding new stuff
- Being with friends – someone to talk to... it's a fun atmosphere
- Get new things

2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?

- Stores are all in one street – close together

- Don't have to waste gas
 - Friendly
 - I know practically everyone that works in the stores
 - Don't have to drive far
 - I like the car part stores
 - I can buy stuff I need when I go hunting
 - There is more than one hardware store – I can find what I'm looking for
 - Can't get lost
 - Good customer service
 - Old Towne Mall
 - Small stores are aesthetically pleasing
3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?
- Northwoods – bears, wolves, trees, deer
 - Old fashioned... old buildings
 - A lot of bars... they are at every corner
 - Stores are very tourist organized... they are not focused on the citizen
 - Never a crowd
 - Cozy
 - Stores cater to the older crowd (35 and up)
 - High priced
 - There is nothing for teenagers
 - I like the displays and scenery at Gander Mountain. I can get everything I need at Wal-Mart.
 - Stores they would like to see: Taco Bell, Arby's, clothing store, department store, skate shop, hobby shop, gun shop, archery, shoe store
4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?
- We need to have more diversity in the stores
 - Gas prices are high – I don't like to travel far away
 - Wal-Mart is convenient
 - There are less stores now than when I was growing up
 - There isn't anything here for me – we go out of town 2-3x month to shop – either in Rhinelander or Wausau

Youth Focus Group #2

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?
- Having a lot of variety – I know I am going to get something
 - Can get wants and pleasures
 - Environment – friendly people and I can get help with what I need
 - Like to spend money
 - Be with friends – fun, prone to buy more things, and look at more things

2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?
 - Close together
 - Convenient
 - I know the employees
 - I know the layout of the store
 - I know what the prices are

3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?
 - Smaller town – not a lot of stuff
 - I can't get clothes or buy CD's
 - All are specialty stores – they only sell knick knacks, like postcards, statues, Northwoods stuff, clothes that say Tomahawk
 - Not a lot of things for young people
 - I buy stuff at the Dollar stores – food and stuff for camping. There, I can find everything I want for cheap and they sell stuff for everyday use. They have more than knick knacks.
 - I don't like Wal-Mart... I don't want one here. They would put everyone else out of business... our town is too small for a Wal-Mart.
 - I like Wal-Mart and would still go there... even if gas prices got higher
 - We need more restaurants – Taco Bell, Fazolli's

4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?
 - Tomahawk is a tourist trap – the stores are for people who don't live here... everything is geared towards knick knacks and old people
 - We have a lot of bars
 - We have the same businesses now as we've had in the past – they just switch around places (Ben Franklin moved, and Standard Mercantile is a lot like Ben Franklin was)
 - We have a lot of gas stations
 - Store owners – I know most of them, this is not like Wal-Mart
 - Wal-Mart is good because it's cheap and has variety... we need some music stores like Sam Goody or Best Buy
 - Tourists – businesses rely on tourism... they don't care about residents

Youth Focus Group #3

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?
 - It's affordable. Not paying \$50 for a pair of jeans
 - You can take your time. Nobody is rushing you
 - Variety
 - Availability of store hours. Not closing at 5:00 at night. Only Nelson's stays open; weekend hours
 - Place to get out of the house [socialize]
 - In clothing stores you are able to try stuff on

- People that work there; if they are nice to you, that makes you want to come back
 - [Being nice] is not trying to sell you “crap.” Trying to sell you something you don’t want
 - When they help you, they come to the dressing room to ask you how your jeans fit. Get you other pair if they aren’t right
 - They are polite [those who work in stores]
2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?
- There are not many people there
 - Too many old people shop there; people 50 and over
 - The stores here are old fashion; they are not like a mall setting
 - Buying antiques
 - During the winter, it’s hard to get to the stores because it is cold and you don’t want to walk outside
 - Too many antiques; every store has antiques
 - [Positive things] crafts
 - Not a lot of people
 - Cheaper at times; It depends, things at Ben Franklin are more expensive than some things at Wal-Mart
 - Can only find Tomahawk shirts at Ben Franklin [and many other retailers]
 - If I was a tourist in the city, I’d feel really welcome I suppose. Could be a good thing
 - I know that the some of the stores like the downtown jewelry store are not as old looking like some of the other ones. More brand new. They try to bring your attention to the jewelry instead of the older stuff [in store]
 - They are all fairly clean
 - Most of the people are nice [good customer service]
 - Knowing the owners does not necessarily make it more comfortable to shop there; just as long as [clerks] are polite I can shop there
 - All the stores are by each other; in general; walk down the middle of the street [to reach them]
 - There is a lot of places to get parts for trucks
3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?
- Old
 - Rustic up north
 - Northwoods feeling
 - More a tourist attraction more than a local attraction; we are over exposed [to this]
 - You don’t want to dress in a t-shirt that says “Tomahawk Northwoods” everyday
 - Up North
 - All the t-shirts are for tourists
 - Selling things that we use a lot around here, in the Northwoods; not Tomahawk features

- Ben Franklin (e.g.) hunting and fishing [products]
- Not antiques!
- We don't have antiques
- The stores downtown are very friendly and personable. When you walk in, they are always asking if they can help you and is there anything specific that you are looking for.
- Normally the [clerks, etc.] know you

Informal Discussion about Big Box Stores/Wal-Mart

- Sometimes it is easy to find products in Wal-Mart; but where you think something should be is not where it usually is
 - We find stuff in Wal-Mart but it usually takes a while
 - Sometimes Merrill has what we want; but when we go in again, it is not there. We find it in Rhinelander or Wausau Wal-Marts
 - When I go to Wal-Mart, I come out [spending] \$100
 - It's good when you have a huge list. Need many things for the house. When you want just one thing, you go there (Wal-Mart) and end up parking a mile away. I hate it and I love it
 - Get some things at Family Dollar
 - Family Dollar is a lot more convenient [than Wal-Mart at times]
4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?
- Size of the store; Wal-Mart vs. Family Dollar; smaller stores are positive
 - Customer service is good
 - Pretty much stick to one thing; in Tomahawk we don't have a lot of different stores to go to; all used stuff (antiques); nobody wants to buy used stuff. They want new stuff.
 - Good to have old fashion, but sometimes it's too much. Good to get tourists to come; at times it [can be overkill]
 - Shop only for groceries in Tomahawk. Not really anything here in Tomahawk that I want
 - I don't really ever shop here
 - Nothing here that they want (parents)
 - Change stores from outdated to modern
 - Maybe change most but not all stores [maintain some things for tourists]; Tomahawk has not changed in 120 years
 - Some of the wood on buildings is cracking; put up siding; boring to make facades the same
 - Hours need to be changed; if you need something for school, many of the businesses are closed already except Nelsons
 - Youth go to Rhinelander because business hours longer [good for teens]
 - Taco Bell in Rhinelander open until 1:00 am; can go there after you shop, etc.
 - Need to sell stuff that is not just geared toward "decrepit" people. Teens and kids in 20s are the ones that buy the most stuff [don't cater to very old people]

- If we had a Pacsun in Tomahawk we would not have to go to Wausau just to get decent clothes
 - [Stores] don't have to be the big names like Pacsun and GAP. There can be privately owned shops that can still sell decent clothes
 - A lot of people go for unique and modern clothes like something that nobody else has
 - They don't have clothes (except Tomahawk clothes)
 - Most kids don't go to Twice as Nice. Ben Franklin only has Tomahawk clothing
 - People that live in Tomahawk don't know what is in the stores
 - Store names are boring; looks of stores outside not appealing; when I think of Silver Threads I think of "hippies"
 - Window; if you walk past and see nothing you like, you are not going to go in (even though those things aren't the only things they sell)
 - Stores are constantly move out [of spaces] and moving. You don't know what is in there; [hard to keep track of the turnover]
 - Don't listen to 92.5 (advertising)
 - Make advertising more appealing
5. Is there anything else you want to add?
- As long as we don't get a Wal-Mart. That will kill all the businesses and then everyone will lose their jobs.
 - Wal-Mart will not solve the problem
 - We could go for a Taco Bell
 - Variety of foods at Taco Bell

Youth Focus Group #4

1. In your opinion, what makes shopping in retail stores pleasurable?
- When you want to buy things like pants they have your size; a lot of variety
 - Variety and selection
 - Reasonable prices
 - If I like something there the first time, I'll probably go back the second time
 - Just getting familiar with what they have; sizes, etc.
 - Also like when cashier [salesperson] knows what they are talking about; intelligent about products; helps a lot
 - Frequent visits makes it more comfortable
 - Friendly [employees]
 - Pleasant, and won't stalk you around the store; don't constantly follow you
 - Help is personable and there when you need them
 - Don't like when they [employees] state their opinion about product [shopper is looking at]
 - I hate shopping; spending
 - I like stores where you can go in and get everything at once
 - Like to shop for brands

2. What are the positive features Tomahawk retail stores have in common?
- Don't have to drive that far
 - Smaller town and smaller business (randomly) find things you can't find somewhere else
 - More souvenir type stuff; good for tourists but not for us
 - Buy something local you are helping the community [money stays in town]
 - Almost everyone knows your name here
 - More inclined [salespeople] to put out the effort to help you if they know you
 - They know more about what we like [if salespeople knows us]
 - Don't have to feel awkward going up to them and asking for help [salespeople who know us]
 - Not much in Tomahawk [clothing]

Informal Discussion about Gander Mountain (located near Wausau)

- Gander Mountain
- They have cool stuff, cheap
- More variety of things in Gander Mountain
- If you are driving to Wausau you might as well shop at a store you like to be at
- [Gander Mountain] always has something different
- You can spend three hours in Gander Mountain looking for stuff

3. What collective image do Tomahawk retail stores convey?
- Mom and pop shops
 - You watch them grow since you were a little kid and some of them fail and some of them just grow
 - They are all boring looking; don't catch your eye; old looking buildings; nothing that you see in window grabs your attention [makes you want to go in]
 - Everything is for "old" people; old town hall look; old = 40 and older
 - Crafts; not things that people are age would buy
 - Stores are interest based; nothing in Tomahawk that you actually need; dying businesses that really don't have much
 - Lack of variety and selection; go to bigger towns for variety and selection
 - Go to Nelson's; [limited variety] of vitamins [for example] sometimes it's good to have fewer options because you don't have to sit there and spend time deciding what to get (Wal-Mart has 900, maybe too much; when I want to buy a certain hair spray in Tomahawk they don't have it so I have to get it somewhere else
 - They all close at the same time at 5:00
 - Not open during weekends; not open when people have time to actually [go shopping]
 - Would not be likely to shop in the stores if they were open longer hours and on weekends
 - It would be more convenient to go there, but extending their hours won't lead to more business for them
 - Specialize to a [narrow] group of ages; not ours

- Lot of businesses go for the Northwoods homey feel, even name their stores and restaurants “Northwoods” something and use that to advertise the smaller businesses
 - I think it gives off the atmosphere of small community; why people come here to vacation
 - Get away from the traffic; big city
 - [Tomahawk] gives people from the big cities a homey feeling when they visit here, but when you are from around here it is boring; locals don’t get that homey feeling; it is the exact opposite feeling for locals
 - How many bars there are in Tomahawk [relative to] retail stores; it’s all about “drinking beer and shooting deer”
 - People from big cities also like to drink beer and shoot deer
 - Nelson’s in always open so I shop there
 - Shop for immediate needs
 - Stores that go along with hobbies people have here get the business because it is related to the town more (bait, etc)
 - It’s convenient that everything is in the same place because our town is so small; don’t need to worry about construction/detours
 - You can walk everywhere
 - Dollar General/Family Dollar; round prices to nearest dollar; not getting cheated; open later
4. Of all the things we discussed, what stands out as being the most important to you?
- That we will use our stores when we need to but because of lack of selection [often] we will wait and go when we want [to shop elsewhere]
 - Homey Northwoods feel and being able to take care of everything at once
 - Everyone knows you
 - Easy to get around
 - Save on gas; wait longer to buy things; buy when I have another reason to go out of town; hop ride with someone else
 - There are families that rely on Tomahawk stores, especially low income people rely on household products and groceries
 - Wal-Mart can be too big; wait in line too much; take business in from little shops; whole town would be shut down except for the bars
 - Usually go through six Northwoods cafes per year
 - The existing restaurants are doing well; maybe we have maxed out on them
 - Business that are solely restaurants usually don’t do as well as the ones with bars in them
 - Most restaurants are on the outskirts of town; people go out to eat the stores are already closed in town
5. Is there anything else you want to add?

- It's weird how you look around see people wake boarding, skiing, but no store to buy the supplies you need to do these things; golf shops sell clubs but at very high prices
- Get more variety and quality at retail store [big box] then you do at mom and pop store
- Wal-Mart is one stop; prices less than mom and pop stores
- Employees know you at mom and pop shops
- Stores are easy to get to on foot or cars

Informal Discussion about What They Would Change

- [Stores should offer] more brand name stuff
- Sport shop that skis and wake boarding and swimsuit
- More colors; too much brown
- Need flashy signs to catch your attention
- Place with pool and foosball tables in town