

# Rhinelanders Consumer Survey Results

In order to better understand the conditions and concerns of consumers in Rhinelanders, 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 222 survey responses

## 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 Rhinelanders, 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 that much of the 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.

- When asked about extended store hours, respondents said they are most likely to shop for non-grocery items during these extended hours:
  - Friday after 7:00 pm
  - 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 that diner is the most popular meal to eat out with approximately 52 percent of respondents eating dinner out at least once a week. Lunch trails only slightly with 47 percent of respondents eating lunch out at least once a week. Breakfast garnered only 21 percent.

- The survey also explored the average cost of meals when dining out:
  - 35 percent said they spend \$5.00 to \$9.99 once a week.
  - 17 percent said they spend \$10.00 - \$14.99 once a week.
  - 10 percent said they spend more than \$15.00 once a week
- When asked about movie going habits, 33 percent of respondents said they go to a movie theater at least once a month. On the other hand, approximately 52 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; The Farmers Market and Art on the Courthouse Lawn were the most popular responses.

| Event Attendance       |           |         |         |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Response               | Frequency | Percent | Mean: - |
| Hodag Country Fest     | 25        | 11.26   |         |
| Independence Day       | 102       | 45.95   |         |
| Rediculus Daez         | 98        | 44.14   |         |
| Downtown Halloween     | 20        | 9.01    |         |
| Deer Hunters Widow     | 33        | 14.86   |         |
| Cruz Nights            | 4         | 1.80    |         |
| Oktoberfest            | 73        | 32.88   |         |
| Art on Courthouse Lawn | 129       | 58.11   |         |
| Farmers Market         | 146       | 65.77   |         |
| GRABRAWR               | 10        | 4.50    |         |
| Badger State Games     | 5         | 2.25    |         |
| Antique Car Shows      | 49        | 22.07   |         |
| Other                  | 21        | 9.46    |         |
| Missing                | 15        | 6.76    |         |

- Respondents were asked if they came to downtown Rhinelander during a typical week to do the following; the responses were:
  - Grocery Shopping – 76%
  - Passing through – 63%
  - Non-grocery Retail – 52%
  - Dinning Out – 43%
  - Work – 33%
  - Personal Care / Professional Services – 16%
- When visiting downtown, 82 percent of respondents park either on the street or in a public lot, and 88 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 10 minutes – 28%
  - 10 to 20 minutes – 23%
  - Over 20 min – 9%
  - Work at home or retired – 24%
- Respondents were also asked how far they live from downtown Rhinelander:
  - Under 10 minutes – 46%
  - 10 to 20 minutes – 34%
  - Over 20 minutes – 10%
  - Live in Downtown – 3%




Based on the above two sets of responses, approximately 83% of respondents live within 20 minutes of downtown, and, only 51% live within 20 minutes of work. This suggests that many area residents and respondents commute out of Rhinelander 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 that are consistent with the busy lifestyles of commuters.

- When asked where and how often they shopped at a particular location, the results were as follows:
  - 59 percent shop in downtown Rhinelander at least once a week
  - 68 percent shop outside downtown, but still in Rhinelander, at least once a week
  - In Wausau and Eagle River/Minoqua weekly shopping was virtual none. But, 24 and 17 percent of respondents do shop in those locations on a monthly basis.
  - Likewise, 33 percent shop by internet or mail order at least once a month
- Respondents were then asked to identify the reason they chose to shop at the above location instead of downtown Rhinelander; overwhelming the responses, including write-ins, dealt with better selection and availability of products.

## 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 Rhinelander. It also examines consumer's feelings about housing and amenities in downtown Rhinelander.

- When asked if they would use a trolley if one was available, 66 percent said they would not. Of those that said they would, a fee of \$1.00 was the amount most respondents would be willing to pay.
- Respondents were asked to write in two stores they would like to see come downtown. Overwhelmingly the response indicated a full size Kohls, Target, or other department store. Also popular were variations of clothing stores, coffee shops and various family style restaurants.
- The graph below displays shows what community assets consumers would like to see developed in Rhinelander. The most popular answers where, green space (in particular a river walk park), and walking and bike trails.

| <b>Most wanted community assets</b> |                  |                |  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--|
| <b>Response</b>                     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> | <b>Mean: -</b>   |
| Walking trails along WI River       | 131              | 59.01          |    |
| Bike Trails                         | 100              | 45.05          |   |
| River Walk Park                     | 95               | 42.79          |  |
| Skateboard Park                     | 18               | 8.11           |  |
| Expanded Green Space                | 91               | 40.99          |  |
| Wisconsin River Museum              | 60               | 27.03          |  |
| Expanded Public Parking             | 16               | 7.21           |  |
| None                                | 8                | 3.60           |  |
| Other                               | 12               | 5.41           |  |
| <b>Missing</b>                      | 10               | 4.50           |  |

- Respondents were asked if they would consider living downtown. 64 percent said they would not, and 30 percent said they did live downtown or had interest in living downtown. Those that had an interest in living downtown were asked what type of housing they would like to live in. The most popular combination of choices was a privately owned single-family home with two to three bedrooms. *Please refer to pages 7 through 10 in the Condensed Item Analysis for more details on preferred styles of downtown homes.*

## Consumer Market Information

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

- Respondents were asked what leisure activities their household participates in. The responses that garnered at least a 50 percent response rate include:
  - Attending Concerts / Shows
  - Computer and Internet
  - Cooking
  - Fishing
  - Gardening
  - Listening to music
  - 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 that are commonly read in their household. The following are the books and magazines that garnered at least a 25 percent response rate.
  - Classic novels and poetry
  - Cooking, food and wine
  - Health, mind and body
  - History
  - 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 that are most listened to by respondents. WXPR and the "other" category were the most popular.

| What radio stations do you listen to the most? |           |         |         |
|--|-----------|---------|---------|
| Response                                       | Frequency | Percent | Mean: - |
| WRLO 105.3                                     | 36        | 16.22   |         |
| WRHN 100.1                                     | 19        | 8.56    |         |
| WHDG 97.5                                      | 47        | 21.17   |         |
| WLSL B93 93.3                                  | 30        | 13.51   |         |
| WXPR 91.7                                      | 80        | 36.04   |         |
| WOBT   | 10        | 4.50    |         |
| WJJQ   | 13        | 5.86    |         |
| Tomahawk                                       |           |         |         |
| Other  | 49        | 22.07   |         |
| None   | 8         | 3.60    |         |
| <b>Missing</b>                                 | 36        | 16.22   |         |

- The following table summarizes the television stations that are most viewed by respondents. Channel 12 garnered the most responses.

**What TV stations do you watch most?**

| Response                 | Frequency | Percent | Mean: - |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Channel 12               | 111       | 50.00   |         |
| Cable 10 NBC             |           |         |         |
| PBS Cable 8              | 39        | 17.57   |         |
| ABC Cable 9              | 51        | 22.97   |         |
| CBS Cable 7              | 32        | 14.41   |         |
| Food Network<br>Cable 53 | 19        | 8.56    |         |
| Fox Cable 11             | 37        | 16.67   |         |
| Other                    | 29        | 13.06   |         |
| None                     | 9         | 4.05    |         |
| <b>Missing</b>           | 29        | 13.06   |         |

- The following table summarizes the publications that are most read by respondents. The Rhinelander Daily News and the North Star Journal appear to be the most read.

**What publications do you read most?**

| Response                  | Frequency | Percent | Mean: - |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Rhinelander<br>Daily News | 109       | 49.10   |         |
| North Star<br>Journal     | 91        | 40.99   |         |
| Milwaukee<br>Sentinel     | 30        | 13.51   |         |
| Buyers Guide              | 33        | 14.86   |         |
| Internet                  | 28        | 12.61   |         |
| Other                     | 17        | 7.66    |         |
| None                      | 7         | 3.15    |         |
| <b>Missing</b>            | 36        | 16.22   |         |

The above three 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 garnered an unusually high response rate.

- Respondents were asked how they felt about a series of statements. The majority Agreed with the following:
  - I always try to buy products and services locally
  - Downtown Rhinelander salespeople are friendly and helpful
  - I feel safe in downtown Rhinelander, even at night
  - I prefer independent stores over chains
  - Independent business should stay open past 5:00 pm
  - There is plenty of convenient parking in downtown Rhinelander
  - I will attend new events downtown
  - More programs for youth should be offered

Fewer, but still many, respondents agreed with:

- I would rather fix something than hire someone to do it
- I am more likely to save money than spend it
- I would recommend shopping in downtown Rhinelander
- I like to bring out of town guests Downtown

No statement had a large percentage of respondents disagreeing

## Considerations

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

- Explore the possibility of extending downtown business hours (consistent among businesses); Friday after 7:00 pm 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 that are leaving Rhinelander on a daily bases for work. Develop strategies to appeal to their lifestyles and both outbound and inbound commuters.
- Using the data provided by the survey on consumer preferences, attitudes and potential business mix gaps, it may be possible for Rhinelander to begin to formulate strategies for business recruitment that address and fit those preferences and gaps (note that 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 Rhinelander include:
  - Clothing Stores
  - Coffee Shops
  - Restaurants
  - Additional lifestyle retail categories including cooking, health, and outdoor

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.