

# ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

## Madison's vibrant downtown: Retail, bars and restaurants

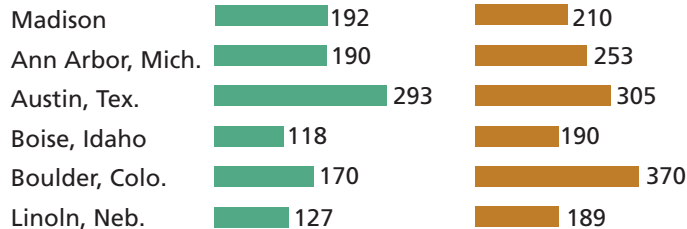
Madison is widely viewed as a middle-size city with a vibrant downtown. Downtown serves key markets including area students, employees, a growing resident population and visitors. But opportunities exist to increase downtown's appeal to these and other consumer segments.

The UW-Extension recently completed a market analysis as part of Downtown Madison Inc.'s "Downtown Dynamic" business retention, expansion and recruitment initiative. One part of the

study examined five "comparable city" downtowns which share attributes such as size, centers of government, demographics, and proximity to college campuses. A business mix analysis of these downtowns reveals some similarities and differences.

Only 8 percent of the Madison metro area's retail and eating/drinking businesses are located in downtown. For comparison, Boulder and Ann Arbor's downtowns have 20 and 17 percent of their metro area's businesses respectively. While this is partly a function of their geographically smaller metro areas, it does suggest that these comparison downtowns enjoy an even more

### Downtown businesses:



economically dominant position in their metro areas.

As in the other cities, downtown Madison has a large share of independent businesses. The market study offers ideas to strengthen these businesses while establishing niches that

would fill business gaps. Niches could be developed around the urban home, apparel, arts/ gifts/ entertainment and neighborhood-serving businesses.

*Source: ESRI Business Information Systems (ESRI BIS), 2007 Estimates*

**Part 1** of this month's series examining Madison's downtown business mix

**Next week:** Downtown's housing units