

Survey: Around 1,200 work downtown

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Over 1,200 employees are working in downtown City of Beloit businesses, according to a study done by the Downtown Beloit Association.

The study was completed in April by Belmark Associates, a student-managed market research organization at Beloit College. More than 140 businesses in the Business Improvement District (BID) were surveyed, said Shauna El-Amin, executive director of the DBA.

The BID borders include north to Saint Lawrence Avenue, east to Short Street, south to the Wisconsin/Illinois state border and west to Fifth Street.

El-Amin said of the 140 businesses that were surveyed 60 responded. Among the 140 businesses in the DBA survey, non-profit agencies, education entities and apartments are counted.

The study stated that of the 1,200 employees about 950 are full-time and 280 are part-time. Those who responded to the survey said they have on average about 57 customers per day who spend an average of \$71.60 per visit.

The amount of money spent on average per trip is significantly higher than the median at \$24.30. According to the study the outliers include companies that collect money every month such as apartment complexes and insurance agencies. When those businesses are removed the average is about \$53 per visit.

About 67 percent of the businesses have a total of 10 employees or less and about 6.8 percent have over 50 employees.

Two outlying companies include Blackhawk Bank, which has 176 employees with 136 full-time, and First National Bank, which has 135 employees with 120 at full-time.

Advertising was also looked at by the survey. About 25 percent of the businesses don't advertise at all. About 40 percent use traditional and non-traditional advertising.

El-Amin said the information will be used as a marketing tool for prospective businesses that are looking to locate downtown.

"If a business is looking at locating in any area economic development-wise they always ask you for stats on what is available in that area," she said. "It's just another tool that we have at our fingertips that will be really valuable for those businesses."

She said companies usually want to know the other types of businesses that are around the area and what is within walking distance from the possible location.

The last time the survey was conducted was in 2009 and about 27 businesses participated in the study, El-Amin said.

Of those 27 businesses employment jumped from 266 to 398, a 50 percent increase.

“It’s definitely strong in the downtown area,” she said. “We are trying to market towards business for the very few storefronts that we have.

Once the Phoenix Project is complete on Grand Avenue there will be about four spots available in the BID, she said.

Those include the former Sun Bed and Surf on Grand Avenue, a location on State Street that used to house the American Red Cross and also two storefronts at the Heritage View building on Pleasant Street.
