

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION & PUBLIC INPUT

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Markets (e.g. housing, retail, development, etc.) are always in flux, impacted by national, regional, and local conditions. The last decade is a stark reminder of this fact. The Great Recession significantly impacted development and growth in most sectors of the marketplace; and while there has been a slow and modest recovery, the effects have been long lasting. Demographics are also shifting both in Wisconsin and nationally where there is a growing senior citizen population (due to the baby-boomers generation), as well as more families delaying (or not having) children. These population shifts affect housing needs and increases the desire for more varied types of housing developments. There is also a growing demand for better bike and pedestrian accommodations, as well as a desire for more walkable commercial centers. More locally, there is the planned road reconstruction of Wisconsin Street (HWY HH), the possible closure of the public grade school, and the addition of a 62-acre Village-owned parcel near the Business Park.

1.1 PLAN PURPOSE

The objective of this project is to develop a plan that will help Lyndon Station better position itself favorably in response to emerging market trends. The Village of Lyndon Station desires to complete a comprehensive Economic Development Plan that will assess the Village's existing and future marketplace, evaluate the Village's commercial and industrial areas for redevelopment opportunities, and develop a strategic implementation plan that will capitalize on the market opportunities identified during the planning process.

This can be accomplished by making smart infrastructure improvements, fostering sustainable business growth, and effectively marketing those development types that meet an undeserved market sector as well as those market sectors that Lyndon Station shows a competitive advantage. And finally, this Plan will provide realistic funding programs that will allow for implementation of the Plan's strategies and recommendations.

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1.2 PLANNING PROCESS

This Plan was discussed and developed between August 2014 and January 2015. Involving people who are directly affected by the Economic Development Plan, especially local businesses, was an important step in this planning process. The project included a business and consumer questionnaire to assess the local business market and the needs of the community. The results of the survey, and market analysis (Chapter 2) were presented to the Lyndon Station Community Chamber for discussion and feedback. The project concluded with a presentation and public hearing before the Village Board. Other project milestones are summarized below.

Project Milestones

Wetland Delineation Conducted

August 22 - September 2, 2014

Village Board Update

October 13, 2014

Online Survey Administered

October 6-19, 2014

Business Survey Hand Delivered
(& Administered)

October 6-17, 2014

Lyndon Station Community Chamber

December 15, 2014

Village Board Update

January 12, 2015

Public Hearing

January 29, 2015

1.3 CTH HH RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

CTH HH runs through the heart of the community and connects the Village to Interstate 90/94. It is functionally classified as a major collector, and is a designated "Alternative Route" for Interstate highway travelers. A pavement replacement project is currently being designed for CTH HH from the south county line through the Village of Lyndon Station, covering 5.33 miles. The project is currently scheduled to be completed in 2017-2018.

In the Village of Lyndon Station, the project is an urban reconstruction of CTH HH to Wright St. There will be new pavement, curb and gutter, sidewalk, pavement marking and permanent signing. Storm sewer will be replaced and it is anticipated to match into existing outfall pipes (the outfalls to the creeks will not be changed). The Village is planning on replacing its sanitary sewer and water main in this WisDOT-let project. Very little new right-of-way acquisition is anticipated. However, this reconstruction project will impact downtown parking, as its existing angled parking creates vehicle conflicts that are less than desirable for an "Alternative Route" for Interstate traffic. Downtown Parking will be reviewed further in this planning process with recommendations that will help alleviate concerns regarding relocating parking to ensure a prosperous downtown.

1.4 PRIOR PLAN SUMMARY

There have been a few recent planning processes that address some aspects of this area of Lyndon Station. The visions crafted and decisions made in these prior plans are acknowledged here and are incorporated and referenced as appropriate in this Plan.

2009 Village Comprehensive Plan

This long-range plan helps Village officials make future land use decisions based on the following vision created during the planning process:

“The Village of Lyndon Station envisions itself as a community that sustains itself into the future with progress on job development and new housing opportunities. This vision is based on the advantages of the Village’s scenic landscape and its key regional location on Interstate Highway 90, and State Highways 12/16.”

The comprehensive plan discusses the importance of the recreation based tourism and manufacturing industries in and around Lyndon Station. Tourism has and will continue to be a significant economic force on the region due to the Village’s proximity to Wisconsin Dells. The County and the Village are both experiencing a transition from traditional rural jobs and farm employment to urban service and manufacturing jobs. This plan also noted that the health care industry is expected to grow as the “baby boom” population reaches retirement ages.

The following objectives were put forth in the Comprehensive Plan to better position Lyndon Station given the locational, economic, and demographic trends:

Objectives

- Growth in the number of jobs and in the tax base.
- Proactive efforts to help adjust local economy to influences from the recession, particularly protection of existing jobs.
- Positive relationships between business and government.

- A proactive village government in facilitating land development through cooperation with landowners/developers and the provision of needed infrastructure. The ultimate goal is to apply village investments in areas that will generate public revenues, village population growth and local business activity that wouldn’t otherwise take place.

2008 Juneau County Retail Market Analysis

This study analyzed the demand for retail products and services in Juneau County. This analysis did not specifically talk about Lyndon Station, but has some insights regarding nearby communities. For instance, it states that Mauston is centrally located in Wisconsin, which puts the community near a variety of attractions and recreational opportunities. This suggest the same for Lyndon Station, as it is located just south of the City of Mauston and closer to Wisconsin Dells.



Mauston’s Convenience Trade Area (CTA) was described as the 53948 zip code, which is roughly a ten minute drive time boundary. In order to determine the Destination Trade Area (DTA), an equal competition analysis was conducted establishing market boundaries around Tomah, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin Dells and Richland Center. This led to Mauston’s DTA to include zip codes for eight communities: Necedah (54646), Arkdale (54613), Friendship (53934), New Lisbon (53950), Mauston (53948), Elroy (53929), Wonewoc (53968), and La Valle (54941). This methodology was considered when developing Lyndon Station’s CTA and DTA (Chapter 2).

1.5 POTENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSURE

Most schools across Wisconsin are currently being affected by budget cuts and Lyndon Station's Elementary School is no different. The Mauston School Board is currently considering methods to close the \$300,000 annual operating deficit it is facing and one of their options is to close Lyndon Station Elementary School. According to district records, Lyndon Station is projected to need approximately \$458,000 in upgrades over the next decade. With no projected increase in residents and tax base, this cost is projected to be more than the district can bear.

Though there is little evidence that school closures impact children's ability to learn and perform, there are examples and studies on how school closures have impacted communities and entire school districts. One of the biggest impacts of school closings is the cost; closing schools is expensive. In 2008, 23 schools were closed in Washington DC and the total cost of the closures ended up being approximately four times more expensive than estimated. School closures are expensive because districts have to relocate inventory, pay to transport students of the closed schools to new schools, renovate the schools receiving these new children to accommodate higher numbers in addition to possibly hiring new staff, and lastly there are costs associated with demolishing or preparing schools to be sold. In addition, sometimes it can be difficult to sell a school for another use and the costs associated for maintaining the vacant building can be costly.

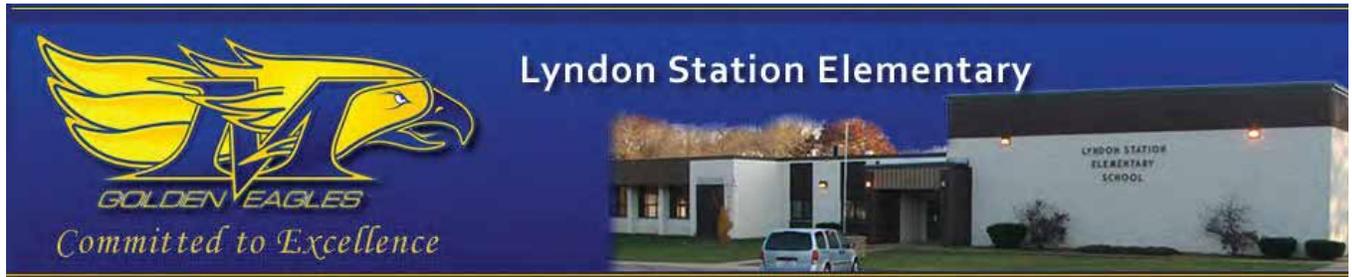
School closures also have an impact to the community as a whole. Closing a school, especially in a small community, can affect housing values and economic development. According to the Rural School and Community Trust (n.d.), rural communities with schools had higher growth rates, housing values, and incomes, more professional workers

and entrepreneurs, and a low percent of households receiving public assistance than did rural communities that had lost their schools (Lyson 2002). Also, schools generally provide community programs during off-hours, including health clinics and continuing education courses. In addition, schools tend to bind communities together as they serve as community gathering places. As Lyndon Station does not currently have a Community Center, losing this community institution could have a negative impact on existing resources and overall opinion of the community. The appearance of a school, particularly the exterior of the building and the grounds, sends a message about the community's convictions and commitment to education. If a former school sits vacant it sends a negative image on the community. At times, school disinvestment has also led to increased disinvestment in communities in the long run.

Whatever the outcome of the debate on whether to close or re-invest in Lyndon Station Elementary School, the decision will have at least some impact on the community. It will be imperative that the Village/School Board consider options for reuse of the building if the school were to close. There could potentially be a use that not necessarily will offset the loss, but will at least mitigate the ill-effects attached to a vacant school site.

Charter School

Another option that has been proposed is to convert the school to a charter school. The concept for the charter school is to create a Montessori School which focuses on "exploratory education" and does not follow the traditional educational model. School officials believe this unique learning environment could serve to attract enrollment from Wisconsin Dells and Reedsburg school district, but it could also deter current students because it strays away from the traditional



educational model. Either of these proposed actions to Lyndon Station Elementary School would have an impact on the community and its residents.

If Lyndon Station Elementary School was to become a charter school there would be the continued benefit of having this community institution and gathering place in the Village. The charter school even has the potential to create additional draw to Lyndon Station for families which could create an increase in demand for housing and encourage people to relocate to the Village. This is exactly what happened when a partnership between the City of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania formed to create a charter school in a deteriorating area within the city; the unique educational option spurred a great deal of demand for housing nearby .

Today, waitlists for Montessori Schools in Madison, Wisconsin are quite long and this instance isn't uncommon across the United States. On the other hand, parents who are looking to have their children receive a traditional education may choose to make the decision to relocate to a community where they can get just that.

Other Alternatives

If the school were to close it will be important for the Village (in coordination with the School District) to develop a reuse plan for the site. The worst case scenario is the school closes and the building sits vacant, costing the School District money to maintain a vacant building and the Village sees one of their strongest assets become a liability and deterrent to growth. A reuse plan can evaluate options to reuse the facility for a senior / community center, fitness center, office center, etc. or to redevelop the site for new commercial or housing uses.

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1.6 BUSINESS SURVEY

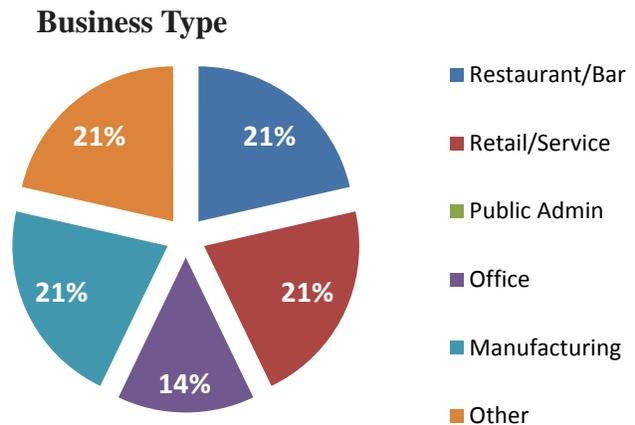
On October 6th, 2014, the business survey was hand delivered, or subsequently mailed, by MSA staff and Lyndon Station Chamber members to 34 businesses in the Lyndon Station area. Thirteen of which were returned (38% return rate).

Business Inventory Questions

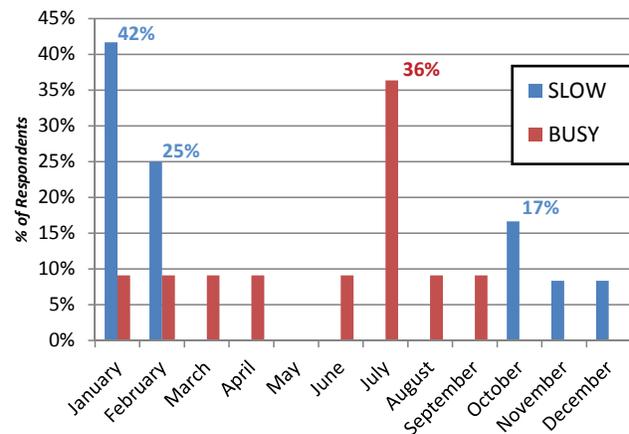
Based on the survey results, the business mix is primarily split between restaurant/bar, retail/service, and manufacturing. Offices make up the remaining 18%. The average business size is 8,500 sq.ft.; however, this number is higher due to one business having 57,400 sq.ft. (without this business the average is 3,300 sq.ft.). Nearly two-thirds of surveyed businesses employ 2-5 people, while 15% employ one person, 8% employ 6-20 employees and 15% employ 21-50 employees. Nearly two-thirds have been in operation for 10 or more years and approximately one-third have been in operation for 1-4 years. When asked what the advantages were with doing business in Lyndon Station, responses included: accessibility (54%), resident population (31%), proximity to Village building/services (23%) and high vehicle traffic (23%). The busiest month for the majority of businesses is July not surprisingly, and the slowest noted by businesses was in January and February.

Market Conditions/Plans Questions

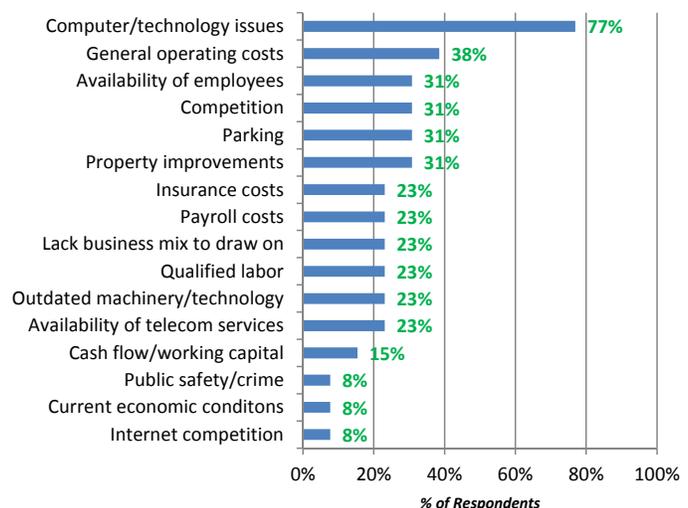
When asked what the major issues facing businesses in Lyndon Station, the majority stated computer/technology issues (77% of respondents) and general operating costs (40%). Over the last 12 months, approximately 54% of businesses saw the same level of business with 38% seeing moderate growth. When asked about their business plans over the next 18 months, 46% had no plans, 23% plan to expand operation, 15% plan to relocate, and 15% plan to sell their business. Businesses see financing and telecommunication infrastructure as critical factors for their success and expansion. When asked of their confidence in the economic future of the downtown, the majority (62%) responded with low confidence.



Busiest / Slowest Month



Major Obstacles Facing Business



Business Variety Questions

Two-thirds of respondents believe that their toughest competition is a business in another community. When asked what types of businesses should be recruited to Lyndon Station to improve its attractiveness as a shopping / business district, responses included research facilities, retail, hotel/motel, library, community center, manufacturing, auto repair, hardware, raft stores, and restaurants. However, when asked what impact a similar business would have on them if they moved into Lyndon Station, 46% felt it would take away some of their business and an additional 31% believe it would threaten the existence of their business.

Business Marketing Questions

When asked where the majority of their business sales were from, roughly 40% stated Juneau County and 17% stated the Lyndon Station area specifically. Less than 10% stated the internet as the primary market and none of the businesses who responded stated travelers/tourists were their primary market.

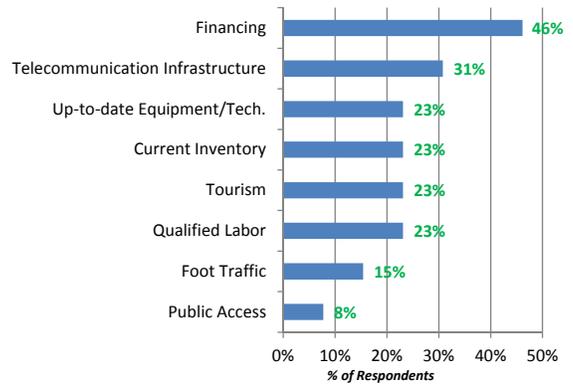
Thirty-eight percent of businesses said they would be interested in participating in a cooperative business marketing effort to attract customers to the downtown and/or encourage residents to shop locally. An additional 31% of businesses stated they may be interested in such an effort.

Currently, the top two community events that best increase foot traffic and/or sales volume for businesses in Lyndon Station are Park Fest and Wine Walk.

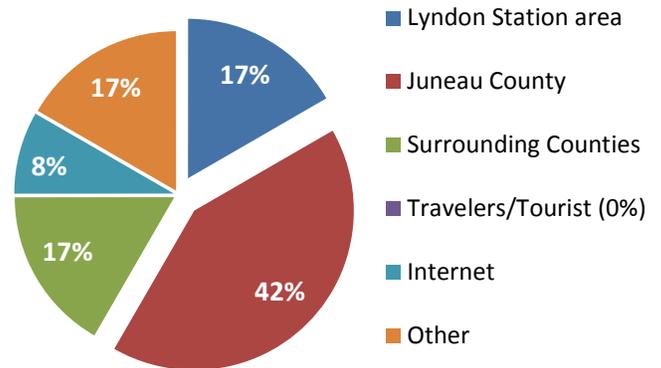
Public Improvement Questions

Based on responses from downtown businesses, the items that need most improvement in the downtown are street lighting/streetscaping, internet accessibility, and overall facade conditions. If these improvements were made, majority of businesses believe they will see more vehicle traffic (62%), as well as demand for additional operational space (54%). Thirty-eight percent believe these improvements will result in new job creation.

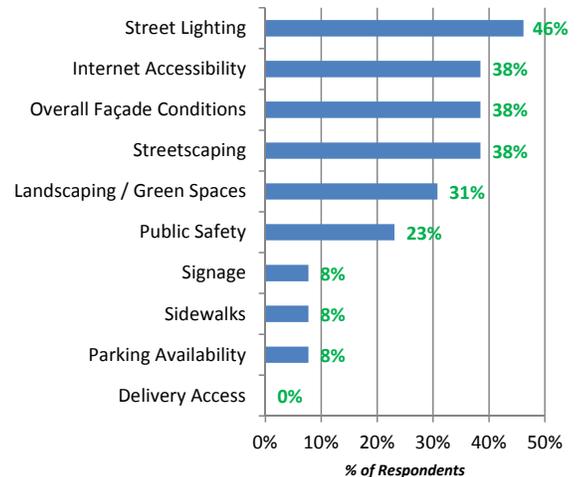
Critical Factors for Business Expansion



Primary Market Area



Public Improvements Desired



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1.7 CONSUMER SURVEY

The 32-question consumer survey was available at the Village Hall and online (via surveymonkey.com) from October 6-19, 2014. In total, 46 surveys were returned. For the size of the community (pop. 500), the number of responses is statistically significant, and thus, provides an accurate snapshot of consumer opinions and shopping habits.

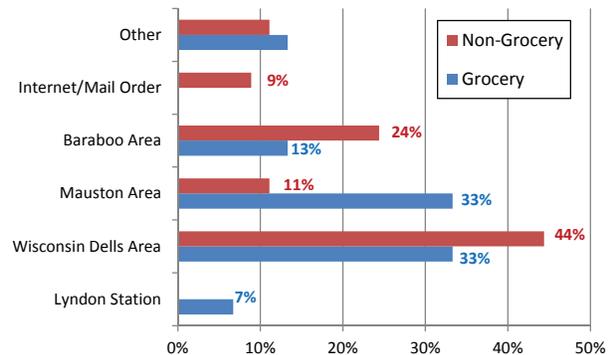
Of those that responded, 74% either worked or lived in Lyndon Station, 13% were visitors (i.e. they live nearby but do not work in Lyndon Station), and 13% were tourists (i.e. they neither work or live nearby). The mix of respondents was significant with the majority being male (55%), between the ages of 45-64 (52%), married (70%), and with an annual household income of \$35,000-\$74,999 (56%). Nearly a third of those responding have at least one child under the age of five, and roughly 15% have at least one child ages 5-9, 10-14 and/or 15-17.

Shopping Habits Questions

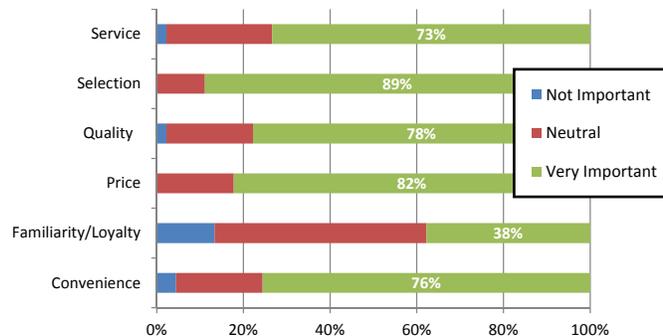
Two-thirds of the respondents do their grocery shopping either in Wisconsin Dells (33%) or Mauston (33%) with only 7% doing their grocery shopping in Lyndon Station. For their non-grocery needs, the majority shop in Wisconsin Dells (44%) or Baraboo (24%) with no consumers doing their primary non-grocery shopping in Lyndon Station. The majority of respondents only go out to eat 1-2 times a month for breakfast (64%), lunch (45%) and dinner (55%); however, roughly one-third go out 1-2 times a week for lunch and dinner. When asked what are important factors to where they shop, the top three responses were selection (89%), cost (82%), and quality (78%). Only 38% felt familiarity/loyalty is an important factor in shopping location. The best time for consumers to shop during the week is from 4pm-7pm (42%) and 10am-4pm on the weekend (68%).

When making a buying decision, the majority of respondents are influenced by word of mouth (69%) followed by the newspaper (35%). The top media outlets suggested include the Juneau City Star Times, Mauston Newspaper, Juneau County Reminder, and Messenger.

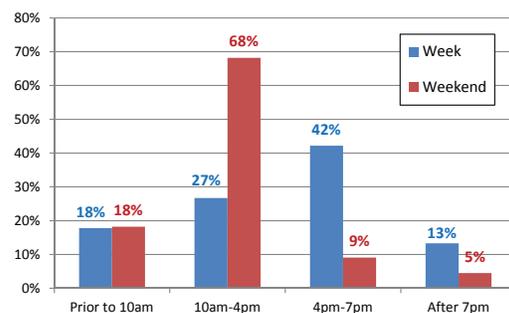
Primary Shopping Locations



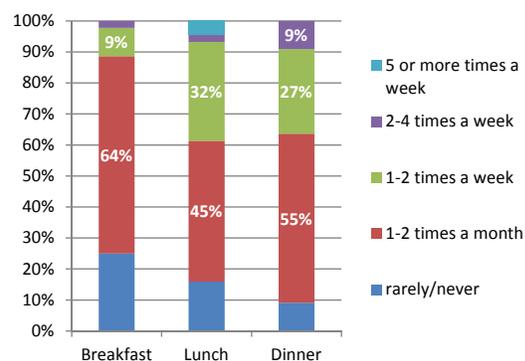
Important Factors to Shopping Location



Best Shopping Timeframe



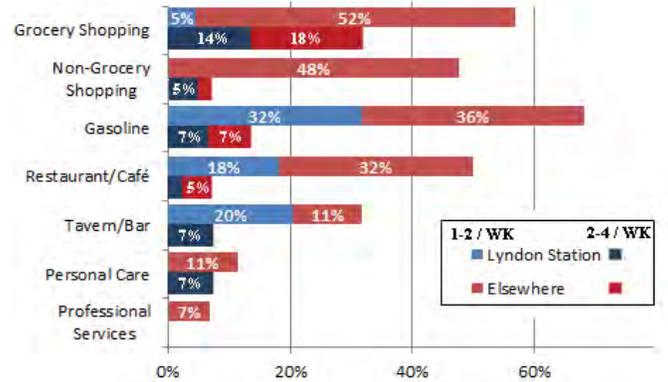
Restaurant/Eatery Frequency



Lyndon Station Shopping Questions

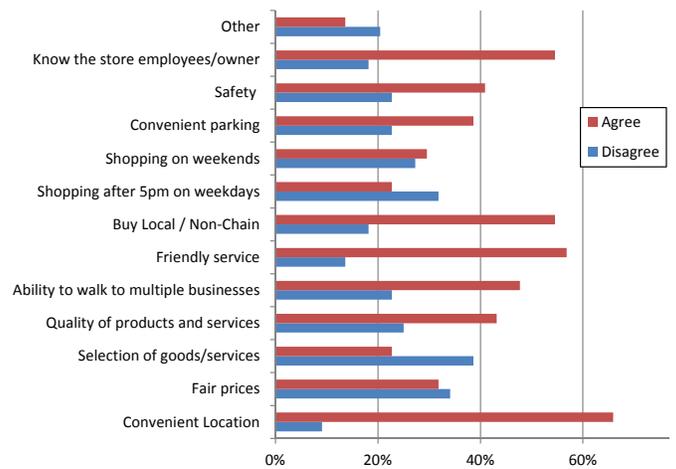
At least 50% of the respondents go out 1-2 times a week to do grocery shopping, non-grocery shopping, purchase gasoline, and go out to a restaurant/cafe. Based on their responses, the majority of these purchases are outside of Lyndon Station, excluding gasoline purchases which are split roughly even, and taverns/bar are frequented more in Lyndon Station (as compared to elsewhere). Notably those that shop 2-4 times a week for groceries are roughly split between Lyndon Station and shopping elsewhere.

Shopping Location (Based on frequency per week)

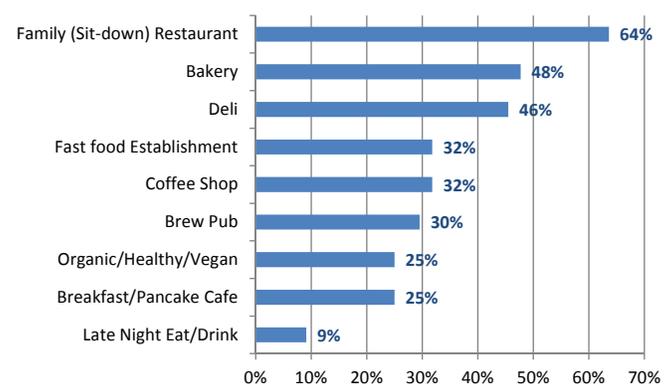


When asked what attracts them to shop in Lyndon Station, the majority of respondents noted its convenient location, friendly service, non-chain stores (buy local), and knowing the store owner/employees. The majority felt the poor selection of goods/services (65%) and high prices (65%) were the disadvantages of shopping in Lyndon Station. In order to get more of their business, the majority of respondents stated a need for more variety of stores/establishments (82%), more competitive pricing (57%), and better selection of merchandise (46%). Roughly a quarter of the respondents felt there needs to be more places to eat, better quality of merchandise, and improved parking. When asked specifically what types of restaurants/eateries are needed in Lyndon Station, most responded with family (sit-down) restaurant, bakery, and deli. At least a quarter of the respondents desired a store that supplied sporting goods (57%), crafts/handmade items (36%), books (32%), gifts/cards (30%), and pet supplies (25%). All respondents said they would shop/eat in Lyndon Station more if these improvements were made and 55% stated they were extremely likely to do so.

Attraction Shopping in Lyndon Station



Restaurant / Eatery Types Desired



Community Growth Questions

As the Village continues to grow/change, most do not want to see the small-town charm change, and some noted the elementary school, existing businesses/jobs, and special events should not change. When asked what type of new housing development is desirable in Lyndon Station, the majority responded with single-family homes (57%) and senior housing (50%). The majority were neutral on townhomes/rowhouses and residential over retail.

When asked what community similar to Lyndon Station has a vibrant and attractive downtown that we can learn from, a plurality of respondents suggested Reedsburg, Baraboo, Iola, and Montello.

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