Downtown Lethbridge Study

Fall 2002

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City of Lethbridge

A garden city located in southwestern Alberta, the city of Lethbridge is home to 72,717 residents, 57,674 of which are 18 years of age or older. The city is divided into six census areas, two each for its South, North and West geographic areas. It is divided north and south by Alberta highway 3, and east-west by the Oldman River.

South Lethbridge is the city's most populous area. The south side's 27,941 residents represent 38.4% of the city's total population. West Lethbridge (22,429) and north Lethbridge (22,347) represent 30.8% and 30.7% respectively.

Lethbridge serves a retail trading area of over 275,000 people, making Lethbridge Southern Alberta's largest regional economic center.

The city supports eight shopping centers and a downtown core that faces similar challenges as other medium size western Canadian cities.

Methodology

This report is based on data collected by Interdisciplinary Studies students and Communication Arts students enrolled in STS270 – Social Science Research Methods and PSC150 – Local Government at Lethbridge Community College in the fall of 2002. Students conducted 575 telephone interviews during October using numbers drawn randomly from the Lethbridge telephone directory.

Using this method, a sample size of 575 yields a margin of error of $\pm$ 4.1%, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data.

The demographic data presented on page 15 demonstrate that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the voting age population within the city of Lethbridge.

Analysis proceeded by way of testing a number of hypotheses concerning frequency of use of downtown businesses, type of use, and characteristics of most and least frequent users.

These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Lethbridge residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at LCC. The analysis presented here is made possible because of a Research Partners Grant from the Lethbridge Herald. We thank the Herald for its support. Any errors or omissions in the analysis, however, are the sole responsibility of the Citizen Society Research Lab.

Initially, we wanted to be able to distinguish between those who work downtown (18%) and those who do not (82%) as well as between the young, middle-aged and older residents. We were also interested in distinguishing between purchases made in downtown malls and those in other street-front businesses as well as between goods and services and food and entertainment.

The following represents a selection of our findings.

Frequency of Downtown Purchases (%)

A majority of respondents indicated that they made purchases at downtown businesses at least a few times per month (67.6%). Almost one-third (32.5%) made weekly purchases.

As expected, those who work downtown were most likely to also make purchases downtown (50% weekly). However, 28.5% of those who do not work downtown made weekly purchases while a further 35.9% made purchases a few times per month.

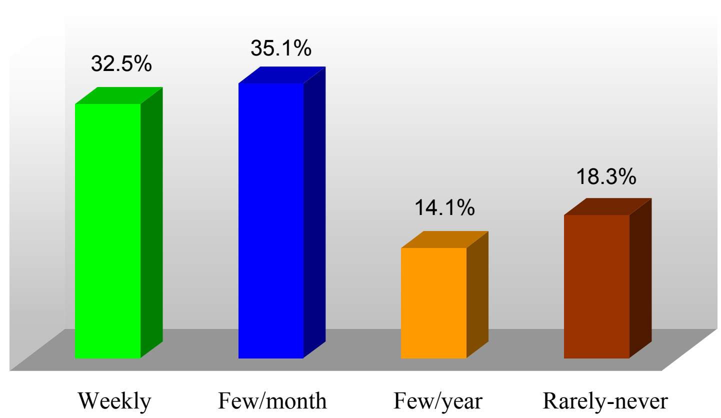
The youth are significantly more likely to utilize downtown businesses (77.2% at least monthly) than are seniors (57.1% at least monthly). Seniors are the most likely to state that they rarely or never shop downtown (31.2%) while the youth are the least likely to never utilize downtown businesses (12.9%).

North side residents are slightly less likely to shop downtown (63.1% at least monthly) than are south side residents (67.4%), and west side residents (71.6%).

Income impacts downtown patronage in a number if interesting ways. Initially, lower income residents are both the most likely to state that they shop downtown weekly (39.1% vs. 26.9% for middle income earners and 34.3% for upper income) or never (21.9% vs. 19.3% for middle income earners and only 12.4% for upper income earners).

Furthermore, although downtown Lethbridge attracts its fair share of lower income and upper income consumers (69.9% for lower and 73.7% for upper income earners making purchases at least a few times per month), middle income earners, the larges segment of the population at nearly two in every five residents, demonstrate the lowest utilization of downtown (only 62.9% at least a few times per month).

Frequency of Downtown Purchases



Malls vs. Street-front Businesses (%)

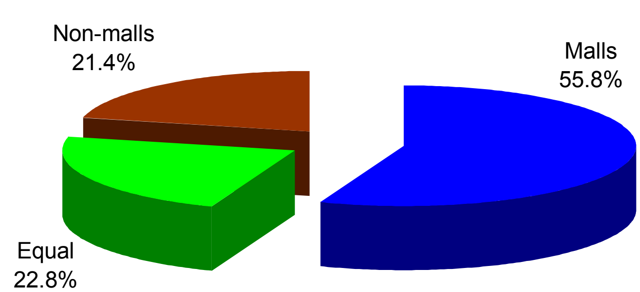
When deciding which businesses to patronize, Lethbridge residents are more than twice as likely to descend on the downtown malls (55.8%) than non-mall businesses (21.4%). Less than one-quarter of all respondents stated they shop equally at mall and non-mall businesses (22.8%).

The youth are most likely to prefer the malls (60.5%) while seniors, although still preferring the malls (52.6%), are the most likely to shop at outside the malls (28.9%).

Higher income consumers are more likely to shop at non-mall businesses (28.1%) than are other income groups.

Interestingly, those who work downtown are more likely to prefer shopping at non-mall businesses (31.7%) than are those who do not work downtown (19.1%).

Malls vs. Street-front Stores



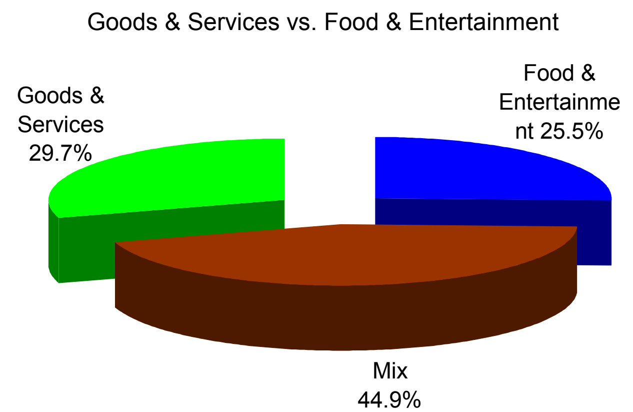
Goods and Services vs. Food and Entertainment (%)

When asked to distinguish between shopping for goods and services and seeking out food and entertainment, one-quarter of the respondents indicated that they went downtown primarily for food and entertainment (25.5%) while 29.7% indicated they shopped primarily for goods and services. Nearly half (44.9%) reported shopping for a mix of both.

As expected, the youth are almost twice as likely to be headed downtown seeking food and entertainment (32%) than goods and services (18.0%) Seniors, on the other hand, are twice as likely to be seeking goods and services (41.6%) than food and entertainment (20.8%).

Lower income residents are slightly more likely to be seeking food and entertainment downtown (30.5%) than goods and services (26.9%). Upper income residents are more likely to be seeking goods and services (29.9%) than food and entertainment (19.0%).

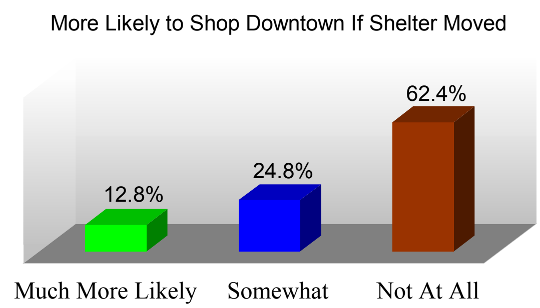
North side residents are much more likely to be seeking goods and services (38.6%) than food and entertainment (22.7%) while south and west side residents seek out each in approximately equal proportions.



Homeless Shelter Move (%)

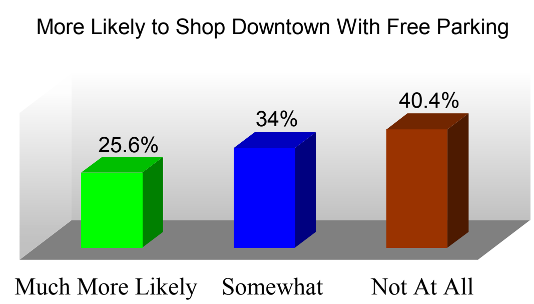
When asked if they would be more likely to patronize downtown businesses if the homeless shelter were to be moved out of the downtown core, relatively few residents stated they would be much more likely (12.8%) while a further one-quarter (24.8%) stated they would be somewhat more likely. Fully 62.4% stated they would not be more likely.

These patterns did not change significantly for any of the demographic groups except for those who work downtown who were much more likely to state they would conduct more business downtown (23.5%) than were those who do not work downtown (10.5%).



Free Parking (%)

Free parking would encourage a majority of Lethbridge residents to conduct more business downtown (59.6%). These numbers do not change significantly for any demographic group, again, except for those who work downtown who were even more supportive (37.9%) than were those who do not work downtown (23.0%).



Tabular Data

Frequency of Downtown Purchases (%)

Frequency - Downtown Purchases (%)	
Weekly	32.5
Few Per Month	35.1
Few Per Year	14.1
Rarely-Never	18.3

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Weekly	30.0	34.8	32.5
Few Per Month	35.9	34.4	35.1
Few Per Year	13.9	14.2	14.1
Rarely-Never	20.1	16.6	18.3

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Area

	South	North	West
Weekly	33.0	29.3	33.5
Few Per Month	34.4	33.8	38.1
Few Per Year	14.3	15.8	11.2
Rarely-Never	18.3	21.1	17.3

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 plus
Weekly	35.1	31.1	32.9	28.5
Few Per Month	42.1	33.8	31.0	28.6
Few Per Year	9.9	17.9	16.5	11.7
Rarely-Never	12.9	17.2	19.6	31.2

Frequency of Downtown Purchases (%)

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Income

	Under $30,000	$30-$60,000	Over $60,000
Weekly	39.1	26.9	34.3
Few Per Month	30.8	36.0	39.4
Few Per Year	8.3	17.8	13.9
Rarely-Never	21.9	19.3	12.4

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Education

	HS or less	Some PS	College	University
Weekly	31.1	38.0	30.1	30.6
Few Per Month	26.9	36.7	33.1	40.5
Few Per Year	20.2	8.0	15.0	15.0
Rarely-Never	21.8	17.3	21.8	13.9

Frequency - Downtown Purchases by Work Downtown

	Work Downtown	
	Yes	No
Weekly	50.0	28.5
Few Per Month	31.7	35.9
Few Per Year	8.7	15.4
Rarely-Never	9.6	20.1

Malls vs. Street-front (%)

Malls	55.8
Equal	22.8
Non-Malls	21.4

Malls vs. Street-front by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Malls	52.2	59.1	55.8
Equal	28.0	18.2	22.8
Non-Malls	19.8	22.6	21.4

Malls vs. Street-front by Area

	South	North	West
Malls	54.6	57.3	55.6
Equal	23.9	21.4	21.9
Non-Malls	21.6	21.4	22.4

Malls vs. Street-front by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 plus
Malls	60.5	56.8	53.5	52.6
Equal	22.2	20.9	26.5	18.4
Non-Malls	17.4	22.3	20.0	28.9

Malls vs. Street-front Businesses (%)

Malls vs. Street-front by Income

	Under $30,000	$30-$60,000	Over $60,000
Malls	55.8	60.8	48.9
Equal	26.1	20.6	23.0
Non-Malls	18.2	18.6	28.1

Malls vs. Street-front by Education

	HS or less	Some PS	College	University
Malls	61.2	60.1	52.0	52.0
Equal	22.4	19.6	23.6	25.1
Non-Malls	16.4	20.3	24.4	22.8

Malls vs. Street-front by Work Downtown

	Work Downtown	
	Yes	No
Malls	46.5	57.8
Equal	21.8	23.0
Non-Malls	31.7	19.1

Goods and Services vs. Food and Entertainment (%)

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment (%)	
Food & Entertainment	25.5
Mix	44.9
Goods & Services	29.7

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Food & Entertainment	30.1	21.2	25.5
Mix	42.3	47.0	44.9
Goods & Services	27.6	31.8	29.7

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Area

	South	North	West
Food & Entertainment	26.3	22.7	26.4
Mix	46.4	38.6	49.2
Goods & Services	27.2	38.6	24.4

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 plus
Food & Entertainment	32.0	23.3	22.2	20.8
Mix	50.0	46.0	41.1	37.7
Goods & Services	18.0	30.7	36.7	41.6

Goods and Services vs. Food and Entertainment (%)

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Income

	Under $30,000	$30-$60,000	Over $60,000
Food & Entertainment	30.5	26.7	19.0
Mix	42.5	45.1	51.1
Goods & Services	26.9	28.2	29.9

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Education

	HS or less	Some PS	College	University
Food & Entertainment	24.4	32.2	25.0	20.8
Mix	42.9	42.3	43.9	49.1
Goods & Services	32.8	25.5	31.1	30.1

Goods & Services vs. Food & Entertainment by Work Downtown

	Work Downtown	
	Yes	No
Food & Entertainment	24.0	25.7
Mix	51.0	43.5
Goods & Services	25.0	30.8

Homeless Shelter Move (%)

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move (%)

Much More Likely	12.8
Somewhat More Likely	24.8
Not At All More Likely	62.4

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Much More Likely	13.2	12.3	12.8
Somewhat More Likely	25.9	23.6	24.8
Not At All More Likely	60.9	64.0	62.4

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Area

	South	North	West
Much More Likely	13.6	14.7	11.9
Somewhat More Likely	29.0	23.3	20.6
Not At All More Likely	57.5	62.0	67.5

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 plus
Much More Likely	15.9	12.8	10.3	12.0
Somewhat More Likely	25.0	17.4	25.6	29.3
Not At All More Likely	59.1	69.8	64.1	58.7

Homeless Shelter Move (%)

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Income

	Under $30,000	$30-$60,000	Over $60,000
Much More Likely	15.4	11.6	13.4
Somewhat More Likely	27.2	24.7	22.4
Not At All More Likely	57.4	63.7	64.2

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Education

	HS or less	Some PS	College	University
Much More Likely	14.5	14.7	12.6	10.1
Somewhat More Likely	30.8	21.0	23.66	24.3
Not At All More Likely	54.7	64.3	63.8	65.7

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Homeless Shelter Move by Work Downtown

	Work Downtown	
	Yes	No
Much More Likely	23.5	10.5
Somewhat More Likely	20.6	25.6
Not At All More Likely	55.9	63.9

Free Parking (%)

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking (%)	
Much More Likely	25.6
Somewhat More Likely	34.0
Not At All More Likely	40.4

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Much More Likely	24.1	27.1	25.6
Somewhat More Likely	33.9	34.1	34.0
Not At All More Likely	42.0	38.8	40.4

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Area

	South	North	West
Much More Likely	27.4	24.2	25.4
Somewhat More Likely	35.9	28.0	34.0
Not At All More Likely	36.8	47.7	40.6

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 plus
Much More Likely	24.0	21.2	27.6	32.9
Somewhat More Likely	31.0	35.8	35.3	34.2
Not At All More Likely	45.0	43.04	37.2	32.9

Free Parking (%)

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Income

	Under $30,000	$30-$60,000	Over $60,000
Much More Likely	27.1	26.0	22.6
Somewhat More Likely	28.9	32.7	40.9
Not At All More Likely	44.0	41.3	36.5

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Education

	HS or less	Some PS	College	University
Much More Likely	24.2	23.6	28.5	26.3
Somewhat More Likely	39.2	31.8	23.8	40.4
Not At All More Likely	36. 7	44.6	47.7	33.3

More Likely to Shop Downtown – Free Parking by Work Downtown

	Work Downtown	
	Yes	No
Much More Likely	37.9	23.0
Somewhat More Likely	34.0	33.9
Not At All More Likely	28.2	43.1

Demographics

Gender	(%)
Male	47.6
Female	52.4

Area of City	(%)
South	40.4
North	24.1
West	35.5

Age	(%)
18-29	30.7
30-44	27.1
45-64	28.3
65 or older	13.9

Income	(%)
$30,000 or less	33.6
$30,001-$60,000	39.1
Over $60,000	27.3

Education	(%)
High School or less	20.8
Some post secondary	26.1
College-tech grad	23.0
University grad	30.1

Work Downtown	(%)
Yes	18.0
No	82.0

Questionnaire

- How often do you purchase goods and services from businesses located in the downtown core?
- Is the majority of your shopping done at the malls or at businesses outside of the malls?
- Would free parking in the downtown core make you more likely to purchase goods and services downtown?
- Will permanently moving the homeless shelter and drop-in center out of the downtown core make a significant difference in your utilizing of downtown businesses?
- Do you work in the downtown core?
- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Income
- Area of city