

By The Numbers -
35 volunteers visited
128 businesses in De Pere
asking **10** key questions

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BANKING WEALTH INSURANCE

building community through business

Business Walk Purpose

A business walk is an opportunity to chat with local businesses face-to-face to gather knowledge that will help foster a more prosperous business climate. The De Pere Business Walk was a one day visitation program to assess concerns that local businesses are facing. The information gathered is to be used to help prioritize economic development initiatives and guide business assistance.

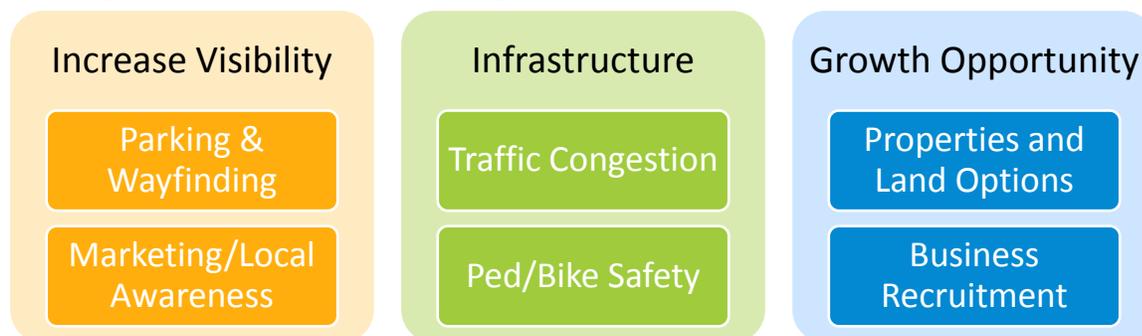
2018 Business Walk Highlights

Turnout and participation for the 2018 annual business walk was tremendous, with 10 percent more businesses interviewed this year. Businesses again were happy to provide input. Some interesting findings included:

- The vast majority of businesses gave De Pere high marks as a positive business environment, with an average score of 4.0 out of 5.
- 78 percent of businesses anticipated growing and remaining in the community in the next five years (up slightly from 75 percent in 2017). 6 businesses indicated that a lack of expansion opportunities at their present site was a concern for their business that has not been resolved.
- Top business challenges identified included: Congestion and circulation challenges (23%), parking (23%), boosting awareness (22%) and growing/recruiting new businesses (16%).
- When asked to identify one community-wide priority, increasing pedestrian/bicycle safety and continuing to address the bridge issue were the top two items cited.
- 24% of businesses requested followup, either as direct assistance to their business or to discuss other community issues/priorities.

A more detailed overview of the business walk process and more specific insights gained through the walk are included in the following sections.

Key Take-Aways



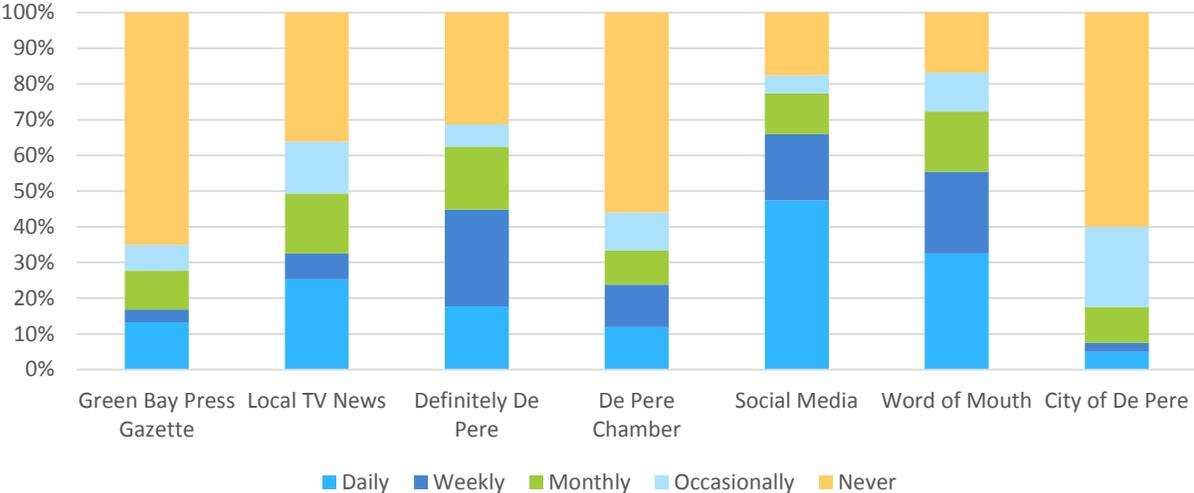
Business Walk Overview

On September 18th, Wisconsin Public Service sponsored a Business Walk in De Pere. The business walk, which conducted brief visits with 127 existing businesses (10% increase from last year and 13% of total City business establishments) in the City of De Pere including retail, service and industrial firms. Participating businesses employ more than 1,500 workers, or roughly 9% of the total daytime employment in the City. The walk was conducted in partnership with the De Pere Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of De Pere, Definitely De Pere, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and received support from Johnson Bank, Baer Performance Marketing and Toppers Pizza. The business walk represented the second annual survey event, designed to take the pulse of the local business community, uncover opportunities and challenges for doing business in the De Pere area, and identify ways that local partners can help enhance and grow the local economy and create a business friendly environment.

The business walk included both a morning and afternoon interview session, during which 35 community leaders, representing both the public and private sectors visited businesses within a geographic region in teams of two. Businesses who agreed to be interviewed responded to ten questions about their business and perceptions of De Pere as a place to do business (a copy of the survey is included at the end of this report). They also had the option of receiving a follow-up visit from a community partner to discuss specific opportunities or challenges identified by the visit, and could choose to receive a copy of the completed report. Businesses which were unable or unwilling to participate on the day of the business walk also had the option to complete the survey online. While substantial marketing efforts were made to inform businesses of the walk, only 27 percent indicated that they were aware of the event, with more than half of these learning about it via email. Social media was the second most reported means of building awareness of the survey.

Looking to the future, businesses were asked to identify the frequency with which they relied on a variety of communications channels for local information. Social media and word of mouth were identified as reliable sources by the most respondents, although TV news and Definitely De Pere also have a contingent of regular users.

Marketing Channel Utilization



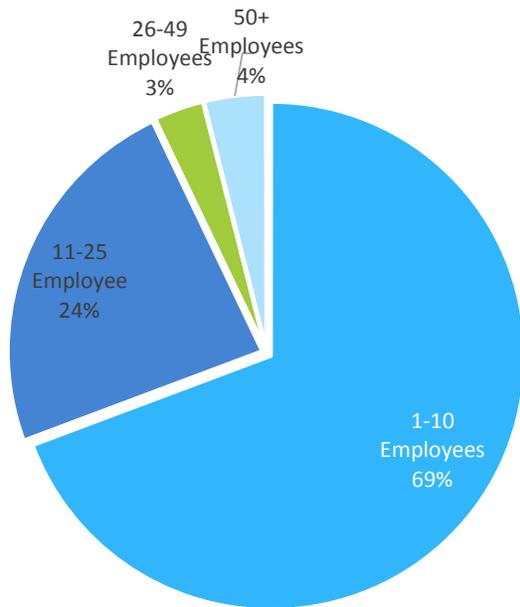
The results from the business visits, including both the quantitative survey results as well as additional comments and insights provided as part of the interviews are summarized in this document. A list of specific comments received through the survey, with individual and/or company references removed, is provided as an attachment.

Business Respondents

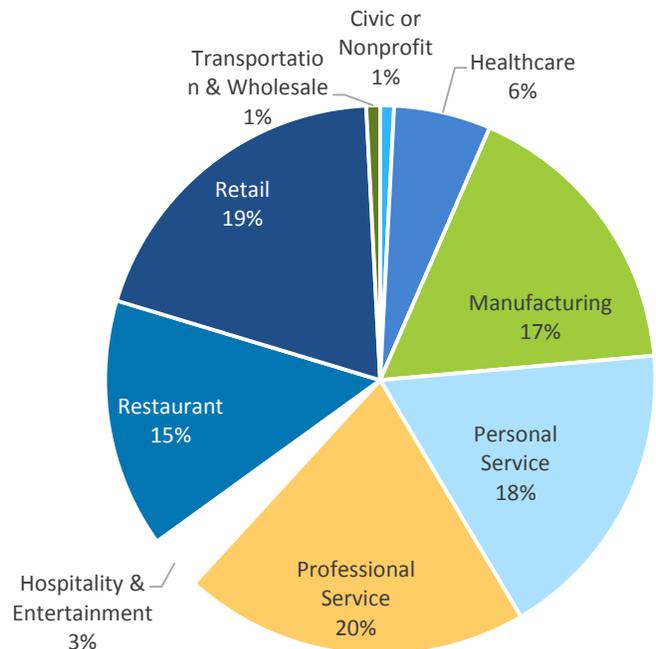
Businesses responding to the question represent a diverse mix of industries and sizes, as illustrated in the charts below. A majority (69 percent) of interviewees were small businesses with 10 or fewer employees, while 4 percent had 50 or more employees. This is roughly the same distribution as last year, and is comparable to the overall business makeup of the City.

Service businesses (personal and professional) represented 38 percent of businesses interviewed, retail and restaurant accounted for another 34 percent, and the remaining businesses were engaged in manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, contracting and healthcare.

Business Size by # of Employees



Respondents by Industry



Similarly, participating businesses represent a mix of older established companies and newer startups. Just under one quarter (24%) of businesses are less than 5 years old, while 20 percent are more than 25 years old, including the four businesses that were founded locally more than 100 years ago. Just under 40 percent of businesses have locations outside De Pere, largely in the region, but also including national corporations. Respondents are fairly evenly split between property leasing and ownership, with 55% leasing and the remainder owning.

While most responses to questions varied based on unique business location or operational factors, there were a few trends where age or industry played a role. Not surprisingly, older businesses were more likely to own rather than lease their locations (56 percent of businesses in their first five years lease, versus 34 percent of those established 25 years or over). Startup businesses on average also gave De Pere higher business climate rankings than other businesses (4.3 for new businesses vs. 3.9 for more established businesses), likely because the current business climate of the community is what attracted them to their location.

Survey Results

Business Climate Ranking

Businesses were asked to rate the overall business climate of De Pere. While there was some variation by age of business, the vast majority of businesses gave De Pere high marks as a positive business environment, with an average score of 4.0 out of 5. In fact, more than one-quarter (26%) gave it a 5 out of 5 ranking and only two businesses (2%) gave it a less than average score. It should be noted that both of these businesses anticipated expansion locally in the next five years.

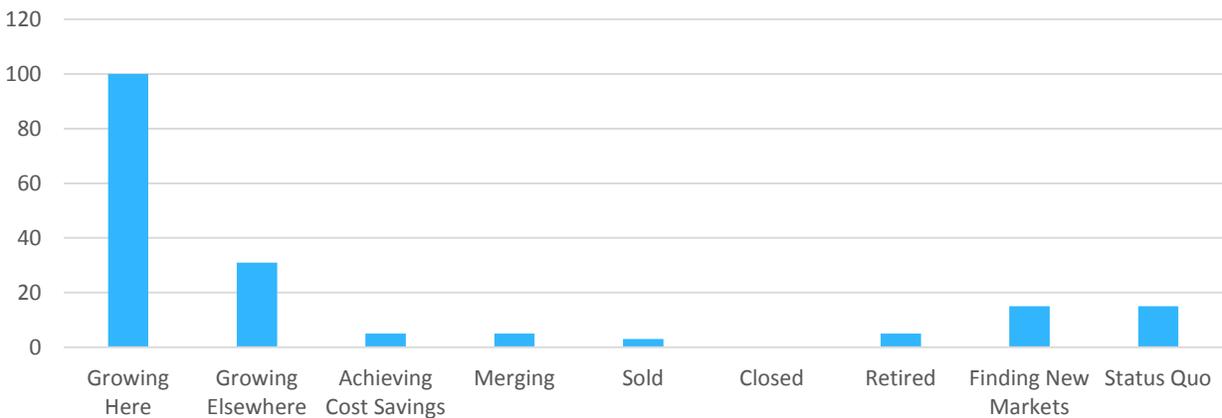
Future Plans

Given the overwhelmingly positive perception of the De Pere business climate, it is not surprising that 78 percent of businesses anticipated growing and remaining in the community in the next five years (up slightly from 75 percent in 2017). Of these, 24 percent also anticipate growing at other locations (also up from 18% in 2017). Only five percent of overall businesses surveyed indicated a firm plan to grow exclusively in a location other than De Pere.

It is also important to note that of those 100 businesses that indicated they anticipate growing in De Pere, 19 have plans to expand within their existing facility/site, while 3 indicated that an additional location was preferred, 8 anticipated relocating in order to address expansion needs, and 6 indicated that a lack of expansion opportunities at their present site was a concern for their business that has not been resolved. These businesses are evenly split between industry types and ownership/lease status.

Of course, not all businesses are in expansion mode. Five surveyed business owners anticipate retiring in the near future, and an additional two businesses plan to sell, and five to merge with another firm. Two additional firms (both professional services) plan to merge with other firms. The remaining 9 percent of firms anticipate no change in the next five years.

Five Year Plans



Changes Desired

Two questions were asked to help identify any challenges or issues faced by businesses that could be addressed by the City and/or its local partners. The first specifically asked for input on activities or projects that could be undertaken to help support their business specifically. Responses focused on a few main issues, including:

- Improved circulation. 23 percent identified circulation challenges as negatively impacting their business. These responses include an even division among 1) need for a bridge, 2) pedestrian and bicycle safety and amenities 3) specific dangerous or congested intersections or roadways and 4) construction mitigation. A significant number of individuals with circulation concerns also desired additional trees or vegetation in certain corridors to improve the pedestrian or vehicular experience.
- Parking. 23 percent identified parking as one of their top business challenges. While many just cited parking overall, roughly half specifically expressed individual issues such as a like/dislike for the 3 hour limits, a need for additional signage, or specific challenges related to their business (loading, accessible parking, adjacent business utilization).
- Assistance with advertising and marketing (local resident awareness of local businesses, and marketing of De Pere businesses and opportunities to the broader region). 22 percent of businesses provided one or more suggestion related to this category, including additional events, relaxed signage ordinances, and coordinated advertising/social media campaigns.
- Improved business mix/business recruitment. 16 percent of respondents identified an improved business mix as potentially beneficial to their business. The most frequent type of business requested was restaurants, and specifically those with outdoor seating. Many also indicated little desire for more bars, although some saw benefits from an increase in overall business density.
- Communication. A handful of individuals indicated that limited or poor communication from the city or economic development partners made it difficult for their business to take advantage of opportunities and/or educate their staff/customers about upcoming projects. 7% of businesses identified issues in this area.

Businesses were also asked to identify any priority issues that they feel should be addressed in the near future to improve the local business climate. This question produced some similar feedback to the above business challenge question, although a few new topics were introduced. Generally, while two-thirds businesses identified specific business challenges that could be addressed, only one-third of businesses identified a specific community priority that should be a focus for the next year. Among those providing a response, the following were common themes:

- Focus on improving ped/bike safety, slowing traffic (especially downtown) (10 responses)
- Continue to work on resolving the bridge (6 responses)
- Address parking (5 responses)
- Promote development (mulva, housing, general business) (4 responses)

Follow-up

The most important element of a business walk is the opportunity to follow-up with individual businesses regarding specific challenges, and to identify strategies or initiatives that will be undertaken as a result of the information learned during the survey. Of those surveyed, 24 percent requested that an individual follow-up with them to address their specific issues. Of those requesting followup, 72 percent identified potential assistance that would help their business, versus 50 percent of businesses that did not request followup but had ideas for assistance that would be beneficial. An overwhelming 85 percent wanted to receive a copy of the business walk results.

2017 Business Walk Actionable Items

Several actions were taken as a result of last year's Business Walk. Here are some to note:

- Several businesses in the West Industrial Park mentioned that recent changes to the City's refuse pick up were creating operational challenges. Specifically a pick up time on Monday mornings at 8 am when many had not yet been in for business and cannot leave refuse out over the weekend. As a result, within a month of hearing this, the City changed the pickup time to later in the day.
- The southern bridge was a major issue for many during last year's Walk. Since that time, the De Pere Area Chamber has gotten more active in the process and progress of the bridge. Updates about the bridge were provided online. They were also handed out during this year's Walk. Progress has indeed been made. As of this writing, the DOT is to announce the official location by the end of 2018.
- Networking was another common theme from the 2017 Walk; but not just any networking event. Specifically, many want to network with the neighbors. In the spring of 2019, the chamber will coordinate the first two "De Pere to Peer" networking events, one in each of the business parks to help connect businesses to one another. If well received, this will be a blueprint for further neighborhood networking.
- To help increase the awareness of things happening in De Pere, the chamber also planned a "State of De Pere" event so the community could hear from the City, chamber, and Definitely De Pere about what's in the works.
- The City also posted incentive information available on their website based on interest in business expansion and associated incentives that may be of assistance.
- A desire for increased events and marketing exposure was identified as having the potential to boost business revenue. Definitely De Pere enhanced existing events and created new events to increase activity bringing thousands of people downtown. Event attendees spent additional time downtown shopping, dining, and taking in all the amenities the City has to offer.

Business Walk Questionnaire

Business Walk Questions:

Business name: _____	Employees: _____
Spoke with: _____	
Survey team: _____	
Attach business card	

1. Have you heard about our 'Business Walk' and if so, by what means? _____

2. How would rate the business climate in De Pere? (5 = excellent / 1 = poor) ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①

3. How long have you been in business in De Pere? (Anniversary date?) _____

4. How long have you been at this location? And do you **own** or **lease** it? _____

5. Would this be considered your "main" location or do you have any locations elsewhere?

6. Do you have any interest in a different or additional location in De Pere - or plans to expand?

7. Which of these best describes [business name] in 5 years?

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing here | <input type="checkbox"/> Merging | <input type="checkbox"/> Closed | <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing elsewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> Sold | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding new markets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving cost savings | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

8. Is there anything that can be done in this neighborhood or the community that would help your business?

9. The southern bridge came up in last year's survey as critically important and some progress has been made.

(handout) What other priorities do you feel need to be addressed? _____

10. How do you find out what is going on in De Pere?

(Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 = daily / 3 = weekly / 1 = never).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| A. Green Bay Press Gazette ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① | E. De Pere Area Chamber Newsletter/Website ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① |
| B. Local TV News ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① | F. Definitely De Pere Newsletter/Website ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① |
| C. Social Media ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① | G. City of De Pere Website ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① |
| D. Friends / Colleagues ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① | Other: _____ |

Would you like someone to follow up with your company after the walk?

Yes / No Contact information: (biz card?) _____

How do you want to be communicated with: (email, phone, text, snail mail, social media)

We will email you a copy of the survey report. What email should we send it to?

Email: (biz card?) _____

Actual Responses (references to individuals and companies redacted)

Is there anything that can be done in this neighborhood or the community that would help your business?

Open-Ended Response

1st came "not welcome in neighborhood"

3 hour parking was awesome!

A high speed bridge

Advertising - De Pere Specific Marketing

Assist with finance improvements to land developments

Awareness of local businesses. I feel these groups are doing a good job in promotion of local businesses.

Be able to get north across the north bridge

Better dissemination of news - no "good" way to get the word out to everyone. Some challenges w/advertising (also seems to have a more traditional approach to marketing).

Bike lane

Bridge to be built

cant think of anything

Chose this location because I take clients on outings -can do this in an hour & debrief w/parents

Congestion at the roundabout is still a big issue. City water price is high.

Construction helped

Construction impacted business

Customers concerned about having just one location

Dumpster - poor communication, changed rules

Enclosure of dumpsters - waste of time

Everyone has been supportive - New Water/very supportive

Everything if very nice

Exposure from Broadway

Fairly content. 3 hour parking was a nice advancement.

Feels as though city doesn't listen or care about concerns

Fill empty buildings

Finding employees a challenge user to have 10 now 4 - better, easier, less headaches broadcast advantages of tech schools to support labor market

Food option Hiring issues

Gentlemen club, more parking - timing especially during event, do something with George St landing, do more with Farmers Market

Growing w/local businesses

I am not as reliant on the typical retail type business of a downtown area, but have more foot traffic and more people is always a plus for top of mind awareness for us.

I can't have tables outside, what?? I can only have benches & this took 3 months. I've been told by signage is "illegal", what?? I need people to see my business. The Farmers Market crosswalk aids blocked my parking & annoyed customers.

Just continuing to get the word out.

Keeping sidewalks and streets clean. Better care of the trees in downtown. Increasing green space wherever possible. Encourage building owners to take care of facades

Would like more restaurants in this area.

Late night college students inebriated

Less competition??

Let's limit the number of bars able to get and keep their liquor licenses. And hold them accountable for the messes they make. Let's also get very intentional about attracting the businesses we seek. I have heard a lot of talk about this, and have seen in particular one developer do a great job with this, but how is the City helping with ordinances, tax incentives, or even not making it so hard to get approved for such things as facade grants? Help us understand what De Pere wants to be and together we can help achieve it.

Lighting in parking lot, people from 102 N Broadway drive both ways in alley
Loves it here, likes roundabout Worries about walkers on trail and vehicle traffic
Lower taxes
Marketing Co-op/Festival's Mkt
Marketing outside of the De Pere area
Mid Valley & Grant St intersection is horrible
More community events, better more stable business neighbors, more social media coverage,
More events at high school & middle school-runs walks, sports-do a lot of partnerships
More options for lunch restaurants and outdoor patio seating with food
More partnerships-we are all kind of inside our own bubbles-more connection with other businesses. Acknowledge special expertise marketing apps.
more people = more traffic but nice to see growth
More residential downtown. Parking isn't ideal. West De Pere downtown is not easy for people to travel to. Speed limit reduced.
More restaurants, primarily lunch.
No more construction - but also noted that it didn't really impact - actually increased the traffic & neighbors were okay sharing parking
None, city was good to work with during building
Not customer driven - a permanent or long term parking spot, a garage would be helpful
Not enough - bar cluster
Traffic Lights (stop) - Lawrence Rd and at Dairy Queen.
Not really - mention parking - people park in front of store to go to nearby businesses which eats up the space. Customers comment - "Finally I can stop here" - pick a different day based on convenience.
Not really, love where we are at
Not really, Mid Valley & Grant St location needs huge help - terrible
Not sure - more businesses would make for more exposure - parents able to run errands while kids in appointment
Noted strategic planning session hosted by Definitely DePere - opportunity to provide points of connection. Noted that networking events aren't as desirable, more one on one conversation are better.
Nothing really - corner location did not have the space for the safe deposit boxes
Nothing they can think of. They don't rely on foot traffic. Some idea of being closer to highway for some customers. Keep bringing in more restaurants - Chinese.
East/West bridge separates city
One of the only issues is parking-they have their own lot-cramped during tax time. Challenge of crossing Wisconsin but employees park there during business time.
Parking
Parking – Next door business uses all
Parking - kept at 2hr parking, enforcement helped 102 N. Broadway - not enough
Parking - others park in lot not part of business, need more stalls
Parking area - seems full - hinders better foot traffic of late
Parking concerns Walking safety (crosswalks) Directions/signage
Parking issue is for him not for his clients - long term challenges, concerned about tax season stress on parking
Parking lot tickets - short term - but lot mostly empty - noted Nicolet Square permits. Option to go more long term
Parking!
Parking, Mission Square, Pedestrian walkability, Crossing & Handicap spaces on Broadway
Police protection w/college security Roundabout
Quit doing road construction
Scheuring Rd roundabouts make it difficult to get to
School district being willing to collaborate more; allow for signage on Broadway St.
Stop Sign
the construction of South bridge

The roundabout is awful. No one acknowledges the crosswalk rules-scary to cross. A deterrent for people to come downtown. We sit forever waiting to cross. We don't have foot traffic-we need it-especially now that the bridge flow is different. We need people to stop-window shop. The light (street) removal hurt us. Love historical buildings, being downtown by water and trail-need a store front.

Too much competition, more advertising

Too much road construction, needs to stop

Trees in this area - walking at lunch is not pleasant. Lots of grass, no shade, speed limit on road between Walmart and church, dangerous parking lot flow & signage (no exit)

Unknown, asked to follow up with 2 owners, looking for a larger building

Visibility on backside, signage

We need more businesses, especially restaurants. The roundabout is a detriment to our business. The traffic back up is BAD, turning is a challenge by Foxview.

We need people living downtown to add activity and vibrancy. Housing options are expanding all around us but not in downtown.

We need to work on the parking situation solution; more west side promotion;

Word of mouth

Word of mouth always helps. They don't advertise.

Word of mouth success

Would love to have a "fare" in alley behind Reid St. Indo-American Society has events like this to attract families

The southern bridge came up in last year's survey as critically important and some progress has been made. What other priorities do you feel need to be addressed?

Open-Ended Response

"I don't want the bridge, it's pretty down there, it will ruin it down there". People don't stop for crosswalk, especially for elderly.

1. Limit alcohol permits and have a real dialogue around limiting bar density. 2. What can we offer as far as programming or business growth support? Classes? Mentorship? Co-working environments? Let's find out what our 70 women business owners need to grow. Let's identify the programming, training, mentoring, or financing they need to be even more successful and then work with organizations and universities to make it happen.

A second bridge will be helpful

another bridge would be helpful

Better traffic (trucks)

Bridge very beautiful

Build it soon

business traffic 65% delivery - traffic is difficult - southern bridge congestion traffic flow

Construction on Main/ Stop & go lights @ Grant & Mid Valley Rd (safety)

De Pere is and continuing to grow, would like to see implementation of plans construction of new buildings

Development - housing options in downtown

Farmers market should go back to the way it used to be - less of an entertainment - wide variety of goods - not enough vegetables. During the day also brings more customers to other businesses

Festival Foods roundabout/need a roundabout

Finding employees

Frustrated that beer is sold at Farmers Market - why isn't market on George where businesses could sell alcohol Art Walk - reach out to business to sell alcohol

Garbage blowing around Fountain removed - upset/love the murals

Happy that the "Press" is beginning more De Pere specific coverage

I like De Pere

Improve garbage helps

Improve street crossing safety. Calming and slowing traffic through downtown.

Large trucks, because of cars on the street - no parking outside of driveway. Shipping large parcels is a need.

Looking to build on adjacent lots, but looking for traffic congestion to clear

Loves De Pere, bridge has no impact

Make it more walker friendly. Was rear ended in roundabout (bridge) because he stopped for a pedestrian.

Make retail area less industrial more welcoming. Traffic control on Scheuring. Stop signs faded, striping gone.

Movement forward with the Mulva art center

No Health insurance, could the City of De Pere lead that, would that be in your realm "Creative Ways to Own My Future"

No complaints

No issues - even with the construction

No other - Southern Bridge important to truck drivers

No other priorities

Not really any other main priorities. Does not like the big planters blocking vision

Not really, Main St was closed too long

Nothing

Ok

Opportunities will come as a result of the bridge

Other projects limited

Panhandlers - police responsive but safety concern

Parking lot time limits, customers take longer and get tickets, they would like to be comped for the tickets. We don't have enough restaurants. We need a "Taste of Broadway". Events downtown, block of streets so people are comfortable to be downtown especially walking.

Parking!

Parking, especially in driveway, pedestrian crossing

Property taxes high - not plowing roads in winter/ fence around dumpster - excessive requirements

Re-light the bridge sign (Chamber), please remove bike rack

Rush hour, more store fronts not much here, seems to need more foot traffic

Same as last question

Signage on trail - NOW! Parking should be allowed longer than 3 hrs, there thou be no limits, we have plenty of parking, people get tickets then don't come back to my place.

Southern bridge still an issue

Speed of Broadway has to be addressed.. It makes it really difficult to increase foot traffic when it is unsafe to cross Broadway

Stop enforcing municipal lot parking - check on parking map- lot is so empty why so heavily enforced

Stop the roundabouts - hard for old people, more accidents, dangerous

Subway in a good location for business

Take roundabout out at end of the bridge, it is horrible. Blinking cross walks - better crosswalk situation

The bridge has changes the business here. Lost a lot of business had to cut staff by half.

The crosswalk as you cross the bridge heading westbound into De Pere near Luna. More waterfront activity. Better access/activity near/on trail to connect to downtown area.

The parking situation especially for our building regarding ourselves and the people we serve which new growth that has happened with surrounding business and housing.

The traffic on both Broadway and Main Streets. Difficult to cross. Speeds people travel to high. The need to continue our downtown appearance.

Traffic

Traffic congestion, need a connection to I43, road construction in the area, customers and suppliers are not so local so transportation is an issue.

We need to increase the entertainment and retail presence in order to drive more people to the downtown.

West Side/Main Ave corridor. Parking. Pedestrian friendly areas.

Would like to see bus stop closer to the office.