2008 Waterville Main Street Consumer Survey

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Alisha Harrington
Rachel Malo
Justine Ramsdell
Joshua Strassburg

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Executive Summary

- 47.88% of the respondents surveyed visit downtown less than once a week. Slightly less than one-quarter visit downtown 3 or more times per week. Most of these visits are at "no particular time."

- 58.82% of respondents stated that they would not be interested in shopping downtown if stores were open later in the evenings of those that report interest, the majority prefer Friday or Saturday evenings.

- Of the respondents 60.7% shop and 58.4% go out eat while visiting downtown. The most significant reasons for visiting/ shopping downtown are for its convenience, 21.4%, shopping, 18.25%, and going out eat, 16.8%.

- 24.41% stated that the lack of selection as well as variety is the primary reason why respondents do not enjoy visiting downtown, followed by parking at 23.47%.

- 37.46% of respondents have noted improvements in the past three years. Of these respondents 27.27% stated that they noticed improvements in general appearance, 20% noticed new business, and 15.45% noted landscaping improvements.

- 50.65% of respondents feel that it is very important to support local businesses yet more than half of the sample indicated that they have to travel away from Waterville to get products they need.

- Over half of the respondents stated that "larger selection of products" is an influential factor when choosing where to shop. Followed by 47.23% of respondent stated "more stores in one convenient area" is an influential factor.

- Prices were found to be slightly more important than customer service in choosing where to shop.

- The majority of respondents reported that they would like to see more clothing stores downtown. 41.22% stated women's clothing, 39.18% stated men's clothing, and 27.75% stated children's clothing.

- 65.35% of the respondents feel that Waterville is the same in comparison to other downtowns in Maine.

Introduction

The following report discusses the findings of a spring 2008 survey of 307 residents in the greater Waterville area. This survey is a follow – up to the survey that was conducted in the spring of 2006. Some of the objectives of the survey consisted of:

1) Determining what residents like and don’t like about the Waterville Main Street.

2) Determining whether the local area residents are noticing any improvements.

3) Determining how important local businesses are to the community.

4) Determining what consumers would like to see for new businesses.

Methodology and Limitations

The survey was created by four Business Consulting Practicum students from Thomas College, located in Waterville Maine, with the coordination and approval of the Waterville Maine Street Program. This is a study to collect information from local area residents.

Our sample size consisted of 307 local residents. These residents were from the following areas: Albion, Belgrade, Benton, China, Clinton, Fairfield, Oakland, Sidney, Vassalboro, Waterville, and Winslow. All respondents were contacted between February and March by telephone.

After the collection process was done, we then coded the survey, entered the data into a software program called Minitab and analyzed the findings.

Table 1: Visiting Frequency

Q1. How frequently do you visit downtown Waterville?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Less than once per week	147	47.88
Once or twice a week	89	28.99
Three or more times a week	71	23.13
N= 307	n = 307	100%

Slightly less than one-half of the respondents reported visiting Waterville less than once per week, approximately 30% visited the downtown Waterville area between once and twice a week and slightly less than one-quarter visited three times or more per week.

When comparing spring 2008 surveys to that of spring 2006, we found that respondents that reported visiting once a week or less increased by about 2-2.5% and people visiting once or twice a week decreased about 9%. However, people that are visiting three times a more per week increased by about 7%.

Table 2: Time of day

Q2: When you visit downtown Waterville, is it generally in:

	Number Reported	% Reported
Morning	56	18.24
Afternoon	65	21.17
Evening	45	14.66
No specific time	141	45.93
N= 307	n = 307	100%

Approximately 18% of the sample indicated they are more likely to visit Downtown Waterville in the morning. 21% stated that they visit Downtown Waterville more in the afternoon, and a little over 14.5% stated that they visit the Downtown Area in the evening.

When compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008 8% of people are more likely to shop in the morning. There was no significant difference in people that visit the downtown area during the afternoon when comparing the 2008 survey to the 2006 survey. However in 2008, people are about 5% less likely to visit the Downtown Waterville area in the evening and 6% more people answered that their was no specific time in which they visited the Downtown area.

Table 3: Longer Hours

Q3: Would you be more interested in shopping downtown Waterville if stores were open later in the evening?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes	126	41.18
No	180	58.82
N= 307	n = 306	100%

Approximately 60% of the respondents stated that it would not make a difference to them if stores were open later and approximately 40% stated that they would like it if stores would remain open later.

Compared to 2006, people are about 6% more likely not to be interested if stores were open later.

Table 4: Suggested Days that Stores Should be Open Later

Q4: If yes, is there a particular evening?

	Number Reported	% Reported .
Sunday	12	14.63
Monday	2	2.43
Tuesday	7	8.53
Wednesday	16	19.51
Thursday	23	28.04
Friday	34	41.46
Saturday	21	25.60
All	1	0.01
N=307	n = 82	*

*The percentage does not equal 100% because of multiple responses.

Out of the 82 people that answered this question, the majority (41.46 percent) prefer stores to be open later on Fridays. Thursdays and Saturdays were favored by slightly more than one-quarter of those surveyed

Table 5: When in downtown area

Q5: Are you more likely to visit downtown:

	Number Reported	% Reported
During Weekdays	82	26.71
Holidays or weekends	84	27.36
No difference between weekdays or weekends	141	45.93
N= 307	n = 307	100%

The majority of the respondents (46%) stated there was no difference in visiting between weekdays and weekends.

Compared to 2006, more people chose to visit downtown Waterville during the weekends. In 2006 approximately 14% of people stated that they visit downtown Waterville on the weekends, in 2008 this increased to almost 27% of the people. In 2008, the percentage of people that stated there was no difference between the weekends and weekdays decreased by about 10.5% compared to survey conducted in 2006.

Table 6: What you do downtown

Q6. When you visit the downtown area, do you:

	Number Reported	% Reported
Go out to eat	178	58.40
Shop	185	60.70
Entertainment	75	24.60
Visit professional offices	63	20.70
Go to bank	104	34.10
Personal care/grooming establishments	76	25.00
Go to work	20	6.60
Other	46	15.10
N= 307	n = 305	*

* Totals to more than 100% due to multiple responses

Going out to eat and shopping was repeated by the majority of the sample. About 58% stated that going out to eat was something they did when visiting downtown Waterville and about 61% stated shopping. A little under a ¼ of the sample stated entertainment and approximately another ¼ stated personal care or grooming needs. Around 34% stated the bank, 20.7% professional offices, 6.6% work, and approximately another 15% stated other for things they do when they visit the downtown area. Of the 15% who responded “other”, their responses consisted of: going to the bars, coffee shops, visiting the library/opera house, walking around, and other random responses.

Compared to 2006, slightly less people stated that going out to eat was what they do downtown. However compared to 2006, people are 10 % more likely to go downtown to shop. People that were surveyed are also less like to visit Professional Offices by 5%, and 10.5% less likely to visit banks when downtown. However in 2008, people are about 4% more likely to visit the downtown area for personal care or grooming needs.

Table 7: Primary reason for going downtown

Q7: What is the primary reason for visiting/shopping downtown?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Convenience	61	21.40
Shopping	52	18.25
Eat	48	16.80
Atmosphere, Customer Service	23	8.10
Variety of Stores	22	7.70
Entertainment	21	7.40
Bank	20	7.00
Community Support	17	6.00
Personal Care, Grooming Establishments	13	4.60
Professional Offices	12	4.20
Socialize	12	4.20
Work	9	3.20
Other	13	4.60 .
N=307	n = 285	*

* Totals to more than 100% due to multiple responses

There were 285 responses recorded regarding the primary reason for visiting the downtown Waterville area. Out of the people that responded the majority of them stated that they visit the Waterville area to eat, which was approximately 17%, shop which was approximately 18% and convenience, which was approximately 21%. About 4.6% stated other reasons for visiting the downtown Waterville area, some of which included the Farmer’s Market and groceries.

Table 8: Reasons not to shop downtown

Q8: Are there any reasons why you don’t enjoy visiting/shopping downtown Waterville?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Parking	50	23.47
Little selection/variety	52	24.41
Shop elsewhere	18	8.45
Road conditions	12	5.63
High traffic	25	11.73
Other	72	33.80
N=307	n = 213	*

* Totals don’t equal 100% due to multiple responses.

Responses to this question were in five different categories. 23.47 percent of the sample said it was because of parking; 24.41 percent said there was due to little selection/variety; 8.45 percent said it was because they shop elsewhere; 5.63 percent said because of road conditions; 11.73 percent said because of high traffic; and 33.80 percent said that there were “other” various reasons.

Compared to the survey conducted in 2006 the category responses were different.

Table 9: Improvements

Q9: have you noted any improvements in the past three years in the downtown Waterville area?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes	115	37.46
No	192	62.54
N=307	n = 307	100%

Over half of the sample reported that they have not noticed any improvements.

Compared to the survey done in spring 2006, 41 more respondents have noticed improvements in the downtown Waterville area. Also 15 fewer respondents didn't notice improvements in the downtown Waterville area. Those whom did notice improvements noted the following:

Yes	Number Reported	% Reported
Decorations	3	2.72
Lighting	4	3.63
Parking	5	4.54
Advertising	2	1.81
New Restaurants	13	11.81
Outdoor Dining	3	2.72
Appearance	30	27.27
Artwork	13	11.81
Awnings	2	1.81
Landscape	17	15.45
New Stores/Business	22	20.00
Random Responses	18	16.36
N=307	n =110	*

*The percentage does not equal 100% because of multiple responses.

Out of the 110 people that answered 2.72 percent responded decorations, 3.63 percent responded lighting, 4.54 percent responded parking, 1.81 percent responded advertising, 11.81 percent responded new restaurants, 2.72 percent responded outdoor dining, 27.27 percent responded appearance, 11.81 percent responded artwork, 1.81 percent responded awnings, 15.45 percent responded landscape, 20.00 percent responded new stores or businesses, 16.36 responded random responses ranging from apartments to farmers market.

Table 10: Appearance suggestions

Q10: Specifically, what would you suggest to improve the APPEARANCE of downtown Waterville?

	Number Reported	% Reported
More Stores & Restaurants	36	17.39
Landscape & Benches	27	13.04
Fix Roads & Sidewalks	32	15.45
Clean Up	15	7.24
Add Colors	16	5.21
Building Renovations	31	14.97
New Signs, better Parking & Lights	21	6.84
Not Sure	5	2.41
Art	4	1.93
Random Responses	16	5.21
Get rid of statue	9	4.34
More outside events & dining	5	2.41
Take down old buildings & signs	3	1.44
N=307	n = 207	*

*Due to multiple responses the percentages won't add up to 100 percent.

Out of the 307 people that responded to the survey, there were 207 responses to what improvements could be made to the downtown area. Of those responses, 17.39 percent answered more stores and restaurants, 13.04 percent answered landscape and benches, 15.45 percent answered fix roads and sidewalks, 7.24 percent answered clean up, 5.21 percent answered more colors, 14.97 percent answered building renovations, 6.84 percent answered new signs, better parking and lights, 2.41 percent answered not sure, 1.93 percent answered art, 5.21 percent answered random responses ranging from cross signals at cross walks to make more welcoming, 4.34 percent answered get rid of statue, 2.41 percent answered more outside events and dining, 1.44 percent answered take down old buildings and signs.

Compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008, about 6 percent less said to get rid of the statue, landscaping also decreased about 6 percent. The improving of roads and sidewalks increased about 11 percent from 2006.

Table 11: Lack of products downtown

Q11: Are there any products/services that you have to travel away from Waterville to purchase?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes	158	51.97
No	146	48.03
N=307	n = 304	100 %

Slightly more than one-half of the sample said they had to travel away from Waterville to purchase products.

Of the 51.94% of people of people that do travel away from Waterville, 20.52% of the people responded that they travel away for clothing; 13.36% responded it was to visit department/box stores; 5.54% said it was for pet supply stores; 9.45% said it was to visit professional offices such as doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, etc. and 19.22% people responded other it was "other" various reasons, none of which was statistically significant.

In comparison with 2006's survey, 14.47% more people are currently traveling away from Waterville to purchase products/services.

Table 12: Influential Factors

Q12: What are the most influential factors when choosing where you shop? (READ LIST) Check all that apply

	Number Reported	% Reported
Lower Prices	140	45.60
Larger Selection of Products	177	57.65
More Stores in one convenient area	145	47.23
Mall Atmosphere	31	10.09
All-Indoor Shopping	25	8.14
More Convenient Parking	100	32.57
Other	39	12.70
N=307	n = 307	*

*Totals to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Three responses were reported by the majority of those surveyed; 45.60 percent responded lower prices, more than half at 57.65 percent responded larger selection of products, and 47.23 percent responded more stores in one convenient area.

	Number Reported	% Reported
Quality	16	45.71
Local	3	8.57
Atmosphere	3	8.57
Convenience	3	8.57
Other	12	34.29
N=307	n = 35	*

*Totals to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

The percentage of respondent who though that quality was an influential factor when choosing where to shop was 45.71%; 8.57% said it was because it is local; 8.57% said because of the atmosphere; 8.57% said it was because of its convenience, and the remaining 34.29% of the 35 that responded “other” had various different reasons.

Table 13: Customer service vs. Price

Q13: What is more important to you when shopping?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Customer Service	111	36.16
Prices	122	39.74
Equal	74	24.10
N=307	n = 307	100 %

Slightly more than two-thirds of the sample said that customer service or prices is more important to them when shopping. The remainder of the people said customer service and prices are equal to them. Although “equal” was not included in the original survey choices many people responded “equal” when asked the question so we incorporated into the survey.

Table 14: Local Business Support

Q14: How important to you is it to support your local businesses?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Very Important	155	50.65
Somewhat Important	130	42.48
Not important at all	21	6.86
N= 307	n = 306	100%

Approximately half of the respondents (50.65%) feel that it is very important to support local businesses; 42.48% feel that it is somewhat important; and 6.86% feel that it isn’t important at all.

Table 15: Mall/box store shopping

Q15: How frequently do you shop at malls, big box stores?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Once a month or more	173	56.35
Once every few months	83	27.04
Twice a year or less	36	11.73
Never	15	4.89
N= 307	n = 307	100%

The above table indicates that 56.35% respondents said that they shop at malls/big box stores once a month or more; 27.04% once every few months; 11.73 twice a year or less; and 4.89% said that they never shop at malls or in big box stores.

Table 16: More stores downtown

Q16: Do you think that there should be more stores downtown?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes (If yes, which stores)	245	80.33
No	60	19.67
N=307	n = 305	100%

The overwhelming majority of respondents (80.33%) indicated that they think there should be more stores downtown.

Compared to the survey done in 2006, approximately 23% more said downtown should have more stores.

Table 17: What kind of stores?

Q17: If yes, what kinds of stores would you most like to see? Check all that apply

	Number Reported	% Reported
Men’s clothing	96	39.18
Women’s clothing	101	41.22
Children’s clothing	68	27.75
Bookstores	41	16.73
Jewelry	26	10.61
Toys	23	9.38
Other	141	57.55
N=307	n = 245	*

* Totals to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Of the 80.33% who reported “yes”, they feel there should be more stores downtown, 39.18% think there should be more men’s clothing, 41.22% said women’s clothing, 27.75% said children’s clothing; 16.73% said bookstores; 10.61% said jewelry stores; 9.38% said toy stores; and the remaining 57.55% of respondents reported “other” various reasons.

Of the respondents who answered “other” to what kind of stores they would most like to see in downtown Waterville, their responses can be found below:

	Number Reported	% Reported
Restaurants	12	0.83
Specific Stores & Restaurants	58	40.55
Random Responses	7	0.48
Entertainment	9	0.62
Arts & Crafts	22	15.38
Department Stores	12	0.83
General Affordable Merchandise	25	17.48
Sports Stores	12	0.83
Bars	3	0.20
Collectible Stores	6	0.41
Convenience Stores	9	0.62
Pet Store	10	0.69
Home Decorating Stores	8	0.55
Specialty & Gift Stores	18	12.58
Grocery Stores	17	11.88
Drug Stores	6	0.41
Electronic Stores	2	0.13
Deli	4	0.27
High-End Stores	2	0.13
Hardware Stores	7	0.48
Hunting & Fishing Stores	3	0.20
Shoe Stores	3	0.20
N=307	n = 143	*

*The percentage does not equal 100% because not everyone answered and multiple responses were given.

The majority stated “specific stores and restaurants.” The following tables describe the specific stores and restaurants reported.

To get a better feel for what kind of specialty stores the respondents would like to see, the responses have been broken down even further.

Specialty Stores	Number Reported	% Reported
Borders	1	0.32
Lowe's & Home Depot	3	0.96
Best Buy & Circuit City	4	1.29
Big Lots & Christmas Tree	3	0.96
Burlington Coat Factory & Kohl's	6	1.93
Gap & Old Navy & American Eagle	7	2.25
Linens & Things & Home Stores	5	1.61
Sam's Club	2	0.64
Debs	1	0.32
Dicks Sporting Goods	2	0.64
Village Market	1	0.32
Freeport Outlets & L.L. Bean	2	0.64
Target & Reny's	7	2.25
Macys & Sterns & Levine's & Butlers & Thayers & Coldwater Creek	7	2.25
Build-A-Bear	1	0.32
Levinskys & Bass Pros	3	0.96
Famous Footwear	1	0.32
Shop 'n' Save	1	0.32
N=307	n = 31	*

*The percentage does not equal 100% of multiple responses.

The above data indicates that respondents had a wide variety of opinions regarding new "specific" stores.

Specialty Restaurants	Number Reported	% Reported
Olive Garden	4	0.50
Indian	1	0.12
Ethnic	1	0.12
Taco Bell	2	0.25
Sonic	1	0.12
Subway	1	0.12
Bugaboo Creek	1	0.12
N=307	n = 8	*

*The percentage does not equal 100% because not everyone answered and multiple responses.

Out of the 8 that answered a specialty restaurant, the majority reported the Olive Garden.

Table 18: Downtown comparison

Q18: How does Waterville's downtown area compare with the downtowns in other Maine cities?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Waterville is worse	44	14.52
Waterville is same	198	65.35
Waterville is better	61	20.13
N=307	n = 303	100%

Out of the 303 people that answered this question, 14.52 percent said that Waterville's downtown area is worse than other downtowns in other Maine cities, while 65.35 percent said that Waterville is the same as other cities, and 20.13 percent said that Waterville is better. Compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008 -the percentage of respondents who reported Waterville is worse decreased by 2.62%; increased 2.63% in means of Waterville being better than downtowns in other Maine cities, and remained the same in response of Waterville being the same as other Maine cities.

Table 19: Housing Developments

Q19. Would you ever consider moving to the downtown Waterville area if attractive apartments or condos were available to rent or buy?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes	37	12.05
No	221	71.99
Not Sure	49	15.96
N=307	n = 307	100%

Approximately three-quarters of the respondents said they would not consider moving downtown Waterville; 12.05% said yes; while the remaining 15.96% said they were "not sure."

In Comparison with 2006, 2008 results indicated 9.66% fewer respondents saying "yes" they would consider moving downtown Waterville; 36.4% more said "no"; 26.74% fewer claimed that they were not sure.

Table 20: Shopping tendencies

Q20: How often do you shop in the following cities?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Portland		
Once a month or more	17	5.54
Once every few months	87	28.34
Twice a year or less	135	43.97
Never	68	22.15
N= 307	n = 307	100%
Freeport		
Once a month or more	18	5.85
Once every few months	81	26.38
Twice a year or less	143	46.58
Never	65	21.17
N= 307	n = 307	100%
Bangor		
Once a month or more	29	9.45
Once every few months	66	21.50
Twice a year or less	119	38.76
Never	93	30.29
N= 307	n = 307	100%
Augusta		
Once a month or more	152	49.51
Once every few months	99	32.25
Twice a year or less	37	12.05
Never	19	6.19
N= 307	n = 307	100%
Online		
Once a month or more	83	27.12
Once every few months	53	17.32
Twice a year or less	49	16.01
Never	121	39.54
N= 307	n = 306	100%

Approximately one half of the sample reported that they shop in Augusta at least once a month or more; followed by 27.12% Online; 9.45% in Bangor; 5.85% in Freeport, and 5.54% in Portland.

Table 21: Residency

Q21: What town do you live in?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Albion	12	3.90
Belgrade	16	5.21
Benton	14	4.56
China	23	7.49
Clinton	20	6.51
Fairfield	33	10.74
Oakland	33	10.74
Sidney	20	6.51
Vassalboro	20	6.51
Waterville	83	27.03
Winslow	33	10.74
N=307	n = 307	100%

Of the 307 respondents, 3.90% are from Albion; 5.21% are from Belgrade; 4.56% are from Benton; 7.49% are from China; 6.51% are from Clinton; 10.74% are from Fairfield; 10.74% are from Oakland; 6.51% are from Sidney; 6.51% are from Vassalboro; 27.03% are from Waterville, and the remaining 10.74% are from Winslow.

Table 22: Duration of Residency

Q22: How many years have you lived in the Waterville area or Mid Maine Region?

	Number Reported	% Reported
0-5	44	14.33
6-10	33	10.75
11-15	29	9.45
16-20	51	16.61
21+	150	48.86
N=307	n = 307	100%

The above data table indicates that 14.33 percent of the respondents said they had lived in the Waterville area or Mid Maine Region 0-5 years, 10.75 percent said 6-10 years, 9.45 percent said 11-15 years, 16.61 percent said 16-20 years, 48.86 percent have lived in the area 21 years or more.

Compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008 there was a 17 percent increase in the amount of people that have lived in the Waterville area or Mid Maine Region for 21 years or longer.

Table 23: E-newsletter e-mail addresses

Q23: Would you be interested in receiving a monthly “What’s up in Downtown E-newsletter to stay up to date on downtown events and sales?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Yes	60	19.54
No	247	80.46
N=307	n = 307	100%

Slightly less than one-fifth of the respondents (19.54 percent) said that they would be interested in receiving the monthly “What’s up in Downtown E-newsletter while 80.46 percent said “no.” Out of the 80.46 percent that said “no,” 4.82 percent said that they already receive it

Table 24: Age

Q24: Into which age group do you fall?

	Number Reported	% Reported
18-30	47	15.41
31-40	69	22.62
41-50	74	24.26
51-60	55	18.03
60+	60	19.67
N=307	n = 305	100%

The majority of the survey respondents (almost half) are between the ages of 31 and 50.

Table 25: Income

Q25: Which of the following best describes your household income this current year?

	Number Reported	% Reported
$35,000 or less	65	23.30
$35,001-$55,000	81	29.03
$55,001-$75,000	73	26.16
$75,001-$100,000	34	12.19
$100,001+	26	9.32
N=307	n = 279	100%

The household income question was answered by 279 respondents. Out of the 279 that answered the question, 23.30 percent responded $35,000 or less, 29.03 percent responded $35,001-$55,000, 26.16 percent responded $55,001-$75,000, 12.19 percent responded $75,001-$100,000, 9.32 percent responded $100,001 +.

Compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008 the income bracket for less than $35,000 to $55,000 has decreased 17.43 percent while the percentages for $55,001-$100,000+ has increased 17.43 percent

Table 26: Education

Q26: Which is the highest level education you have completed?

	Number Reported	% Reported
12th grade or less	24	8.05
High School Grad or Equivalent	48	16.11
Some College, but no degree	74	24.83
Associates Degree	52	17.45
Bachelor's Degree	68	22.82
Master's Degree	25	8.39
Doctoral or Professional Degree	7	2.35
N=307	n = 298	100%

The majority of the sample reported on an educational level of high school grad, some college, or an associated degree.

Compared to the survey conducted in 2006, in 2008 13.85 percent more people have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 27: Assumed Gender

Q27: What is the respondent's gender?

	Number Reported	% Reported
Male	116	37.79
Female	186	60.59
Unable to Determine	5	1.63
N=307	n = 307	100%

Approximately two-thirds of the sample is female.