

# Janesville Business Retention Survey

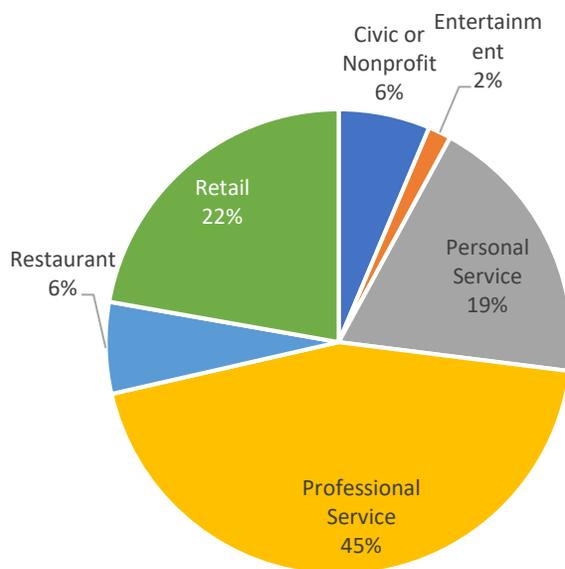
## September, 2018 Retention Survey Findings

A business walk was conducted by the Downtown Janesville Inc. staff and volunteers during September of 2018. In total 64 businesses responded to the survey either in person or online. A summary of findings is below.

### Business Respondents

Businesses responding to the question represent a diverse mix of, as illustrated in the charts below. Service businesses (personal and professional) represented 45 percent of businesses interviewed, retail and restaurant accounted for another 28 percent, and the remaining businesses were engaged in civic, nonprofit or entertainment activities.

Respondents by Industry



### Business Operations

Participating businesses were asked about their operations – specifically their typical operating hours and the busiest and slowest times of the week/year. This information can help DJI more effectively market existing businesses, and also identify dates and times when events would have the greatest positive impact for businesses (i.e. when they are typically slow).

#### *Hours of Operation*

Of all respondents, 43% are open late (6 or later), and 25% offer some weekend hours. Including only retail, restaurant and service businesses, those figures rise to 48% with evening hours at least once per week and 93% offering some weekend hours. When asked if they would like to offer more hours, 18 percent of all types of businesses indicated that they would, but were unable to. The reason cited was evenly split between personal reasons, cost factors and the lack of critical mass of other businesses

open late. Unlike many communities, workforce availability was not cited as a major limitation for additional hours nor a primary business challenge.

### *Busiest & Slowest Periods*

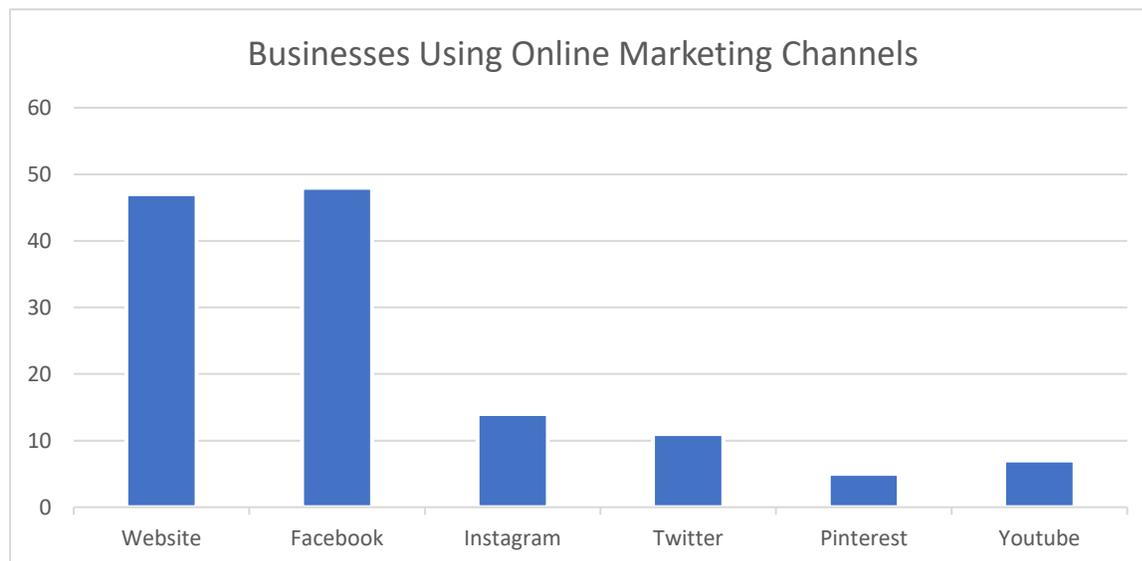
Overall, winter was identified as the busiest season, with 42% of all businesses selecting winter months as a busy period. Spring and summer were tied as the second busiest period, with 19% of businesses choosing a selection of months from these seasons as a source of peak traffic. Not surprisingly, more than half of retail businesses chose winter months as a profitable period along with many professional service providers, while other seasons were more mixed in terms of the type of business attracting significant traffic downtown.

The slowest period for businesses similarly reflected a diverse customer base, with nearly one-third of businesses identifying winter as the slowest period (overwhelmingly January and February), while a similar period identified the peak of summer as a slow period. Generally, businesses with significant foot traffic during winter are slowest in summer and vice versa, although approximately 10 percent of businesses indicated some variability in seasonality, with multiple months throughout the year as peak traffic periods.

On a weekly basis, Mondays or Tuesdays were identified as particularly busy by one-third of businesses, although restaurants often cited weekends as among the busiest. There was a general consensus that late afternoon (especially 4-5 pm) is a particularly slow period for many businesses (25%), while mid-week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) was another popular response (23%). Unfortunately, retailers with weekend hours often indicated that these periods were also slow.

### **Marketing & Communications**

All but five businesses (92%) reported utilizing some type of online marketing channel. Websites and Facebook were the most popular, with most businesses having both, although nearly one-quarter (24%) have only one or the other (slightly more Facebook pages than websites). Among businesses utilizing less common platforms for marketing, there was no industry trend, with businesses of all types reporting use of Instagram, Youtube and other platforms.

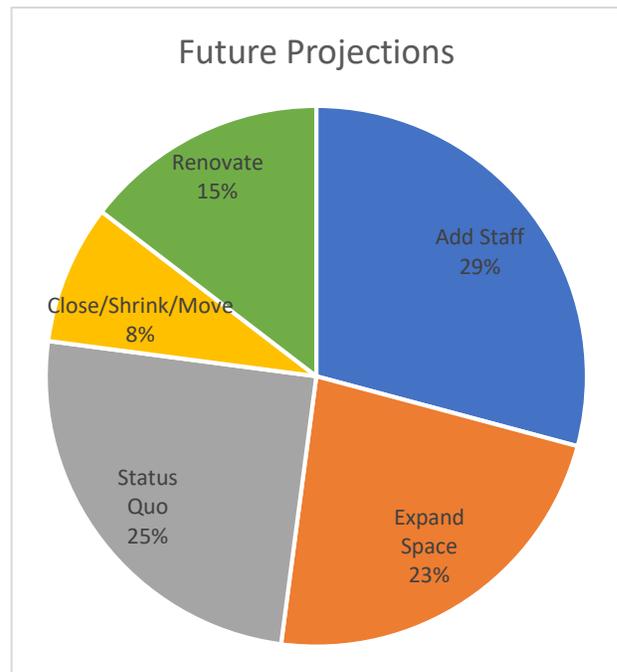


Participants were also asked about their preferred method of receiving communications from Downtown Janesville Inc. (DJI). The most highly rated form of communication was email, which received a 3.1 out of 4, followed by Facebook (2.6 out of 4) and the website/business meetings (2 out of 4 for each). Block captain visits were preferred by many (but not all) businesses with limited online presence.

This trend is even more pronounced when businesses identified a single preferred means of communication, with more than 43% choosing email, followed by roughly 20% preferring Facebook.

### Future Projections

Businesses were asked about their future plans for their business (in the next five years). A full 71% of businesses indicated that they anticipate some type of positive activity, as indicated in the chart at right. These include investing in their space (renovating), expanding products or services, adding staff or expanding square footage. Many businesses indicated that they would undertake multiple growth initiatives. In contrast, 23% anticipate no change, while only 6% (3 businesses) anticipate shrinking or closing during this period. It will be important for DJI to work with the 14 businesses anticipating physical expansion to ensure that these businesses are able to find suitable space to remain downtown as a result of this growth.



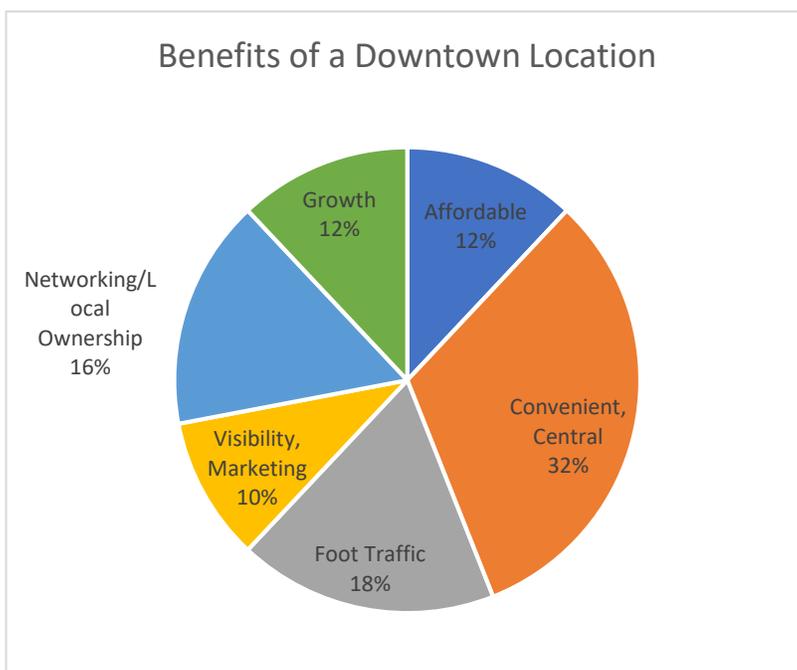
When asked to identify types of businesses that would complement or benefit their business if located downtown, there was a strong consensus that additional restaurant offerings (nearly 1/3 identified one or more restaurant types currently lacking) as well as need for a grocery or convenience store (27% identified this as a need), as well as demand for clothing, accessories and shoe stores, identified by 24% of respondents. It is notable that the third most common answer, from 16% of respondents, was simply more. More business density in general was commonly cited as the key to boosting downtown foot traffic. The full table of recruitment targets identified is included below.

Category	Number of Mentions	Comments
Restaurants	20	Breakfast, brick oven pizza, ice cream, healthy, ethnic, open late, deli
Grocery/Convenience	17	
Clothing/Accessories/Shoes	15	Not consignment
More – shopping and specialty	10	
Gift & Specialty	7	Also kitchen, computer, bookstore, pharmacy
Hotel	5	Many are excited about the new hotel opening

<b>Sporting Goods &amp; Rental</b>	4	Bike, Kayak, Paddleboat Rental
<b>Children's</b>	3	Toys, Activities, Museum
<b>Wine Bar</b>	3	
<b>Services</b>	3	Cleaning, Insurance
<b>Coffee Shop</b>	3	Another one, located near other edge of DT
<b>Apartments</b>	2	For workers, more customers
<b>Bakery</b>	2	
<b>Crafts</b>	2	Quilts, hobby
<b>Offices</b>	2	Daytime employees, foot traffic

### Benefits of Downtown

Respondents identified multiple reasons that downtown is a location of choice for their business. There were several items identified by a majority of respondents, as shown in the chart at right. While many businesses identified affordability as an initial factor in their decision making, an equal number cited the growth potential and increasing vitality of downtown as a primary reason for their choice.



### Challenges of Downtown Location

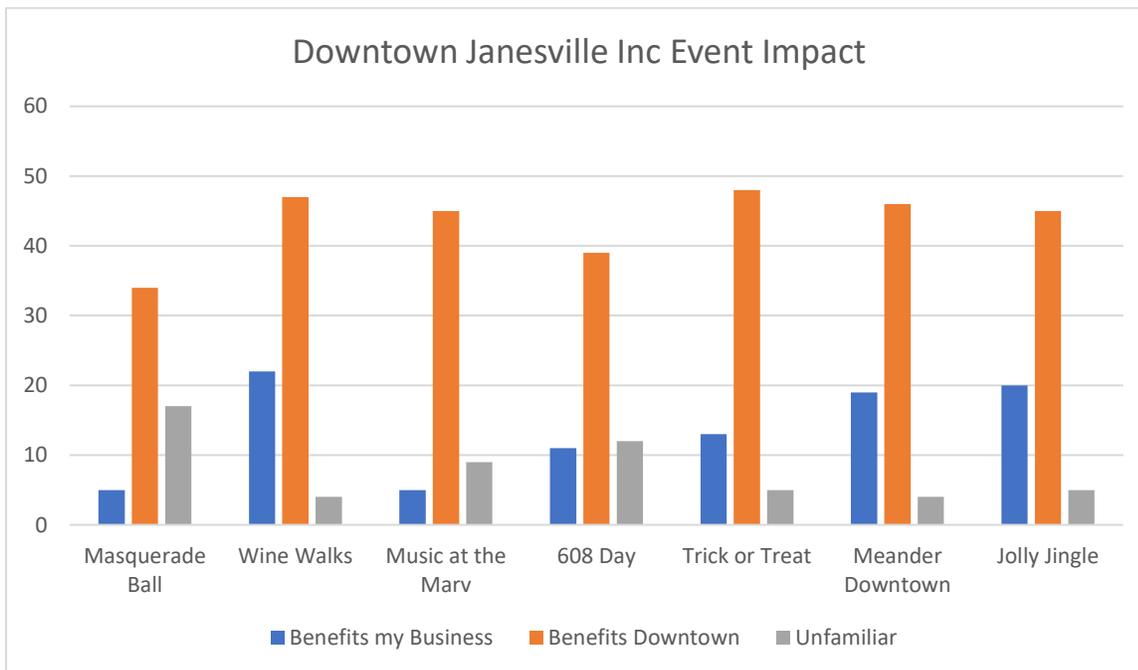
When asked to identify challenges faced by businesses located downtown, parking was the response most often cited – mentioned by exactly half of respondents. However, several of those who mentioned parking did acknowledge that the problem is often perceived, localized to a specific block, or particularly concerning for some (elderly or handicapped, those making quick stops). The second most commonly referenced issue was a lack of consistent foot traffic, or difficulty reaching/marketing to customers (19%), followed by a negative perception of safety (9%), fostered by the presence of blight/poorly maintained buildings (8%) or homelessness (4%).

Because parking was an anticipated challenge, respondents were also asked about the commuting habits for employees of their business. Nearly three quarters (74%) of businesses indicated that all of their employees drive alone to work daily. At the other 25% of businesses a fair number of employees walk or bike to work, while a handful carpool or take the bus. For those employees that drive, 49% provide private parking in lots on site or adjacent to the business. The remaining half of employees park in public areas, including on street (61%), in a lot (29% - senior center, main and dodge street mentioned) or in the ramp (14%).

### Downtown Janesville Inc Value

Respondents were asked two questions regarding current and prospective activities and programs by DJI which provide value to downtown and individual businesses. A chart showing perceptions of each event is on the following page. Most businesses were familiar with the various events hosted by DJI, with the Masquerade Ball being the least familiar. The Meander Downtown, Jolly Jingle and Wine Walks were identified as the most beneficial for individual businesses, while most events were perceived as beneficial for downtown as a whole (note: adding the benefits downtown and unfamiliar figures results in a nearly equivalent ranking for all events as relates to the benefit brought downtown).

Ideas for additional events or programming that would be beneficial include (in order by frequency of mention); street dance/block party, sidewalk sales, music festivals, networking events, farmers market expansion, art events, craft beer/oktober fest, lunchtime picnics for workers, food festivals, holiday parade, increased decorations, night market.



Lastly, respondents were asked to identify ways that DJI could add value to their business. The table below indicates the number of responses within several key categories of assistance that were perceived to be of value.

Activity	Mentions	Comments
<b>Marketing Assistance</b>	14	Online marketing, newspaper inserts, social media promotions, joint advertising purchases, marketing center/visitor storefront, recognize business anniversaries & achievements
<b>Increased/Improved Communications</b>	5	Increased outreach for those that can't make meetings, awareness of opportunities, activity

<b>Parking Advocacy</b>	5	Additional signage, advocate against 1 hour spaces, add short term pickup spots, workforce parking permitting
<b>Events</b>	8	One quality event each season, more business events, increase business engagement opportunities, innovative events, include peripheral businesses
<b>Recruit Businesses</b>	2	
<b>Encourage Investment</b>	4	Encourage property renovations, market available properties
<b>Advocate for Services</b>	3	Coordinated flower watering, homeless outreach, downtown wifi