



TOMAHAWK BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION SURVEY REPORT



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Finally, the author wishes to express his gratitude to all those business owners and managers who completed the survey. It was easy to tell that many respondents thought carefully about their answers and sought to provide meaningful, often very specific information about the state of Tomahawk's business climate and suggestions on how it can be improved. Their answers demonstrate not only how much they care about succeeding in business, but also indicate how proud they are of their community and its residents.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Retaining businesses and helping them to expand are important goals within many Wisconsin communities. An increasing amount of data is being collected from business owners and managers throughout the state about the strengths and weaknesses of conducting business in these communities. Some of the data indicates what owners and managers feel they need to help them succeed in business.

This report outlines the results of a business retention and expansion survey recently conducted in Tomahawk, Lincoln County, Wisconsin. The survey instrument was specifically designed to gather information from Tomahawk small businesses, primarily those with 15 or fewer employees. Its main focus was to gather information from businesses about whether they are interested in collaborating to help promote business and the community and, if so, to what extent. Survey data also outlines business characteristics and other information that may be useful to Tomahawk businesses, the local chamber of commerce, local government, and any other entity seeking to strengthen an already viable business sector.

In general, survey results indicate that many businesses are open to the possibility of working together on a few specific initiatives meant to encourage shopping in Tomahawk and to help plan and promote community activities. Although support for such collaborative efforts cannot be considered widespread throughout Tomahawk based on the limited number of business owners/managers who completed surveys, the numerous positive comments about working together seem to make the pursuit of collaborative strategies worthwhile. Business owners/managers for the most part seem to realize that pooling their limited resources could help businesses in town become more successful. And, although many of these businesses compete with each other, owners/managers seem to believe that promoting the community as a wonderful place to visit will translate into more business for everyone. The Tomahawk Chamber and local government, with support from entities like the University of Wisconsin – Extension, the Main Street program, and other organizations can work together to help coordinate these collaborative efforts.

Survey results also indicate that business owners/managers believe and are concerned that more and more Tomahawk residents are choosing to shop outside of the city. Many respondents made specific suggestions on how they think this trend might be reversed. At least some of these suggestions can be used as a basis to formulate marketing or other kinds of strategies that may help to attract customers from the Tomahawk populace.

Business owners/managers seem more satisfied with the overall community than they do the city's general business climate. While recognizing that improvements can be made to the business climate, many respondents also believe that there are positive things already existing within that climate to build on.

Several positive comments were made about the job the Tomahawk Chamber and local government is doing to help promote the City of Tomahawk and its businesses. That said, many respondents believe that both the chamber and government can do more to keep businesses in town. They also think that more can be done by those two entities in collaboration with owners and managers to persuade entrepreneurs to relocate or open businesses in Tomahawk.

Introduction

The Tomahawk Business Retention and Expansion Survey was designed to obtain specific information from Tomahawk small business owners and managers about what they think are the best aspects of doing business in the city and what can be done to make it easier for their small businesses to succeed. The Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce, business owners on its Downtown Business Council, Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, and University of Wisconsin Community and Economic Development specialists all worked with UW – Extension, Lincoln County to design a questionnaire that meets the needs of the Tomahawk business community.

In several ways, this survey is very different from other business retention and expansion questionnaires, most notably those offered through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and the Main Street Program. For instance, this survey was designed to obtain a great deal of qualitative information from business owners and managers focusing on how they feel about doing business in Tomahawk. We believe that this kind of qualitative information, solicited mainly through open-ended questions, can help to suggest future courses of action that the community can take to help improve Tomahawk's business environment. Also, unlike many popular business retention and expansion surveys, most of the open-ended questions are at the beginning of this survey rather than the end. It was decided to place these questions at the beginning primarily because they were the most important. We wanted respondents to focus immediately on these questions while their minds were the most fresh. The majority of those completing surveys chose to thoroughly answer the open-ended questions at the beginning of the document (about 60%). Lastly, the survey has only 32 questions, far less than the number of questions found on many other business retention and expansion surveys.

Several closed-ended questions in this survey ask respondents to rate business and community factors. Some of the rating and other closed ended questions were derived from surveys published by the Wisconsin Main Street Program, the UW - Extension Plover City Community Assessment, the University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Program, and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

The fact that the survey is quite unique poses one particular disadvantage. Although some closed-ended answers can be compared with data obtained from other business retention and expansion surveys, nearly all the open-ended answers cannot. This is the well justified sacrifice we made by tailoring the survey to the specific needs of the Tomahawk business community.

It is worth noting that a relatively innovative approach was used in an attempt to improve the survey return rate. Business owners from the Downtown Council and Tomahawk Chamber of Commerce members were asked to conduct personal interviews with fellow business owners and managers using the questionnaire. Although this may have helped to boost the return rate, there is not enough evidence to suggest that it did so in a meaningful way. Seventy-six out of 356 business owners and managers that received the survey chose to complete it (21.3% return rate). The length and thoughtfulness of the answers provided suggest that most respondents spent a good amount of effort and time completing the questionnaire.

Improving Your Business

Question #1 of the survey asked "What in your opinion are some of the most positive aspects of doing business in Tomahawk?" Out of 70 answers to this question, 25 chose to emphasize positive attributes that they feel Tomahawk people possess. Adjectives like "friendly," "honest," "loyal," and "good" are used frequently to describe Tomahawk residents. Twenty-one respondents mentioned that they thought

that Tomahawk's "small town atmosphere" helps to create a positive business environment. Most of these respondents in some way indicated that part of Tomahawk's "small town atmosphere" can be attributed to how people in the city treat one another and tourists. Another eleven responses emphasized how little traveling needs to be done to shop in Tomahawk. Some of these responses alluded to the convenience of shopping in the city.

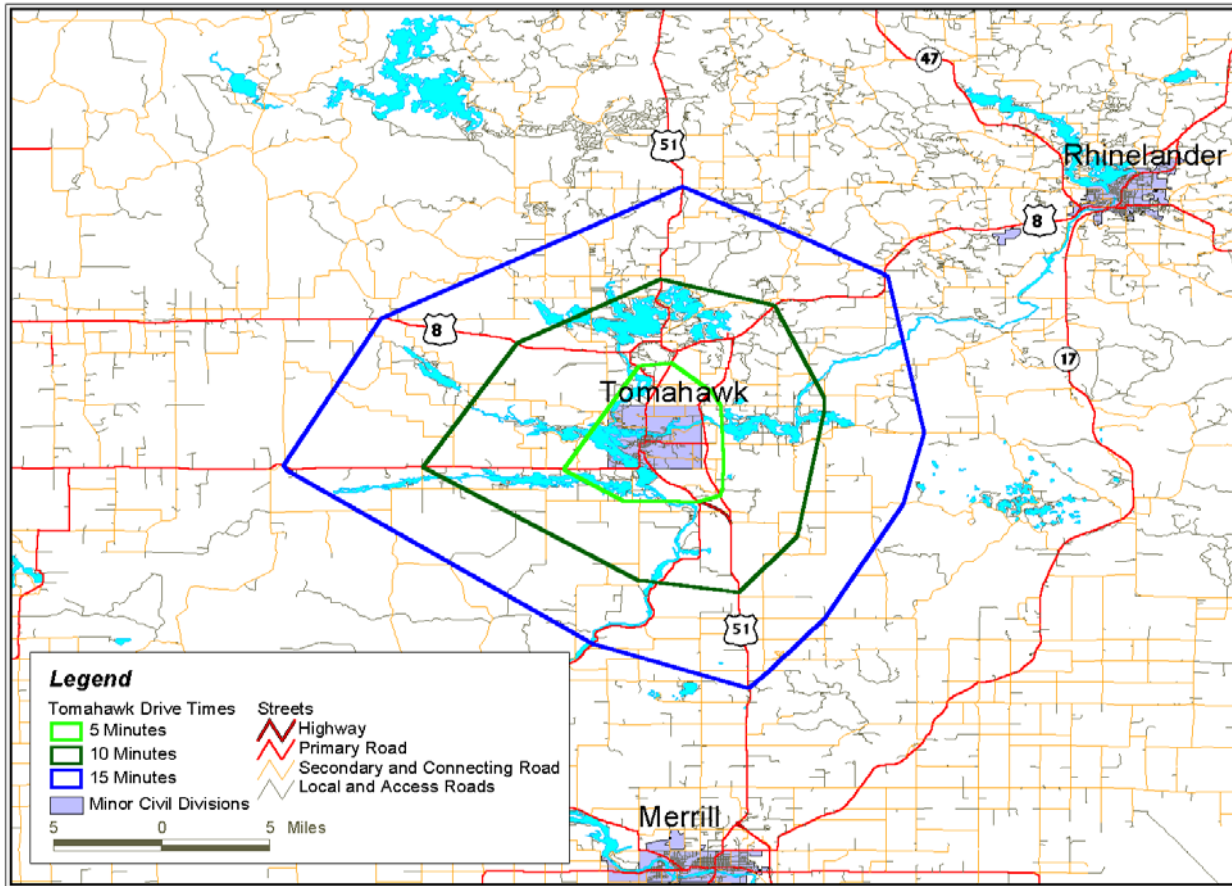
A sample of the answers given for Question #1 demonstrates how much these business owners and managers think that Tomahawk's small size helps local business. One respondent wrote that Tomahawk is a "more personal small community – everyone knows everybody. [A] friendly atmosphere [exists]. Doing business in Tomahawk keeps the money in town – benefits all business in Tomahawk." Another wrote "friendly service; word of mouth advertising works well because of the small community." Yet another respondent wrote "People know you. Your word and a handshake are good enough. Trust is there." Based on these survey results, it is evident that many business owners and managers think that Tomahawk's greatest resource is its people followed closely by its "small town atmosphere." A complete list of comments for the first five questions of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Question #2 asked "What in your opinion are some barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?" Sixty-five surveys include responses to this question. Although answers to this question are quite varied, it is possible to discern some general patterns.

Several respondents seem very concerned about the lower prices and selection of goods offered by retail competitors, primarily "big box" stores, located outside of Tomahawk. These answers reflect a belief that those who live in or near Tomahawk are willing to travel some distances to Wausau, Rhinelander, and Merrill thinking that they will receive better prices and selection. As the drive time analysis map at the top of page 3 indicates, these places are not within convenient driving distances (defined at 15 minutes or less) of Tomahawk, but in the opinion of respondents many Tomahawk residents still feel it pays to shop outside of the city.

One respondent wrote "people in general are 'bottom-line' driven. They want the personal service that is offered in Tomahawk, but are not willing to pay for it. It's tough competing with the 'big boxes' even though they are a considerable distance from Tomahawk." Another stated that it is difficult for many Tomahawk small businesses "to keep various inventory prices at a competitive price with larger retail stores." And yet another simply wrote "can't beat Wal-Mart, Menards, etc." Nearly a quarter of the respondents made some direct reference to the willingness of locals to seek better selection and deals outside Tomahawk. A couple mentioned that highway development near Tomahawk has helped encourage people to shop elsewhere. Business owners are clearly concerned that they are having trouble attracting local residents to their establishments. Considering the distance and time it takes to travel outside Tomahawk to shopping areas, there is perhaps an opportunity for local businesses to market how inconvenient such trips actually may be. Do the costs of traveling such distances outweigh the benefits of saving a couple dollars? This marketing strategy may not work, however, if people are traveling outside of Tomahawk possibly because they cannot find what they are looking for inside the city. This may warrant further study.

Diagram 1



Map prepared by Tom Geiger, Matt Kures and Bill Ryan, University of Wisconsin-Extension (February 18, 1999)

Some respondents also seem concerned that Tomahawk businesses are too dependent on tourists and the weather. A few mention that they do not feel that local government is doing enough to foster business growth and retention. Overall, it can be concluded that the types of barriers mentioned are almost as varied as the kinds of small businesses that are represented in this survey.

After identifying some of the more important barriers being faced by Tomahawk small businesses, the survey asked what specific initiatives administered by a collaboration of Tomahawk businesses could be done to overcome those barriers (Question #3). It was most encouraging to see the many specific, creative strategies proposed by the 57 people that chose to respond to this question.

Responses to this question like Question #2 were also somewhat varied. Many respondents (39%), however, chose to in some way emphasize the importance of businesses working together and with other entities like the city and chamber to establish collaborative event planning and marketing programs. To many of these respondents, event planning also means event participation. Several mentioned that current events such as the “Taste of Tomahawk” be maintained while more respondents thought additional events to help draw shoppers to town are needed. One wrote that there should be “more city initiated events that draw tourists to Tomahawk.” Another suggested that Tomahawk events need to include more vendors from the city rather than from outside places. A respondent implied that Tomahawk can somehow duplicate the successful City of Merrill (Lincoln County) annual “Crazy Days” event that promotes downtown small business.

Collaborative marketing was frequently mentioned. One person suggested that a “Shop Tomahawk” public education program featuring recognition for a local business be created. Several would like to see cooperative or joint advertising of businesses. [We should] “promote Tomahawk and our businesses. We should not be referred to as a gateway to the north – we want people to stop and shop here...People need to know what is available here.”

In conjunction with collaborative marketing and event planning efforts, some respondents feel that several areas of the city need to undergo beautification or aesthetic improvements. Implied is a sense that several entities must work together to accomplish this task. A few others would like to see Tomahawk small businesses increase and/or develop more convenient and uniformed business hours that would help to attract customers. Some other respondents are interested in seeing more skills training provided to the local labor force. One suggested that business owners could help teach new merchants business skills such as bookkeeping and web development.

Question #4 asked “What are some things the local chamber can do that it is not already doing to help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?” Comments mostly focused on the chamber doing a better job coordinating and marketing events, promoting itself, marketing the city as a whole or the business community, and recruiting businesses. Rather than suggesting what the chamber can do better, a significant portion of respondents (17%) chose to praise the chamber for the work it is already doing. A few respondents expressed concern that somehow the chamber was not doing enough to keep Tomahawk dollars in Tomahawk. We can only speculate that this might mean that the chamber according to these respondents needs to do a better job of promoting Tomahawk businesses to local consumers. Lastly, a couple respondents suggest that the chamber do more to provide businesses with management and other training opportunities.

The final open-ended question at the beginning of the survey (#5) asked “What are some things local government can do that it is not already doing to help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?” Many respondents (21%) suggest that the local government find ways to do a better job of recruiting businesses and revitalizing certain areas of the city. Responses also suggest some concern with local taxes, primarily property taxes. Local government, some imply, should work to lessen the negative effects of highway construction on businesses. Nearly all of the comments in one way or another advocate that local government take a more active role in helping to foster business growth and retention. None of the comments in this section stated that local government should have less responsibility promoting business retention and expansion. About 16% of the respondents felt that local government is already doing a good job in helping to remove barriers that prevent Tomahawk businesses from achieving greater success.

A couple of the more detailed answers to Question #5 that help to summarize the thoughts of most of those who responded to the question were: “Local government needs to realize that in order to have a healthy business community [it] needs to help the downtown. [It] needs to rezone to allow growth for small business. [It] may need to provide low interest loans to allow small business to revamp or remodel buildings. [It] has to take on a ‘self employed’ mentality,” Local government should “assist in acquiring/maintaining signage [along freeways] promoting Tomahawk...Assist in advertising/promoting Tomahawk through the media” and pay “greater attention to removing eye sores such as abandoned buildings, etc. to present a better image of Tomahawk.”

Although some respondents in these first five questions allude to collaborative initiatives that could help the majority of Tomahawk’s businesses become more successful, there is not enough evidence in those responses to support the notion that there is among business owners/managers widespread belief that such tactics should be undertaken or that they would significantly improve the city’s business environment. It

can be said, however, that there seems to be a fair amount of support for using collaborative event planning and promotion and city/business marketing strategies. An in depth analysis of answers provided for questions six through nine of the survey should help to reveal how devoted these business owners and managers might be to working together on initiatives.

Can and Should we Collaborate?; An Analysis of Questions #6-9

Questions #6-8 were designed to indicate how committed the business owner or manager would be to planning and implementing collaborative strategies that may help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful. Question #9 asked respondents to rate the level of difficulty in complying with Wisconsin state business regulations.

Questions #6 – 8 were as follows:

6. “What is your level of commitment to helping plan strategies that may help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful?”
7. “How committed might you be toward devoting a portion of your time to help implement a strategy or strategies that could help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful?”
8. “How committed might you be toward devoting funds to help implement a strategy or strategies that could help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful?”

Respondents were asked to answer the questions using the following rating scale:

Not Committed Somewhat Committed Extremely Committed
 1 2 3 4 5

Results for Question #6 – 8 are below:

Table 1 **QUESTIONS #6-8**

Rating→	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Number of Responses	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
Question #6	5	13	25	20	10	3.23
Question #7	7	18	23	18	7	3.0
Question #8	15	19	23	10	4	2.56

These answers indicate that most respondents are overall at least somewhat committed to helping to plan and implement strategies that could help Tomahawk businesses become more successful. Respondents are somewhat less committed to help fund the implementation of such initiatives. It is encouraging to note that 41% of those who responded to Question #6 said that they have a high level of commitment to

planning strategies. An additional 34% responded that they would be somewhat committed to helping to plan collaborative strategies. This means that three quarters of the respondents indicated an interest in working with a planning team. For Question #7, 34% indicated that they have a high level of commitment and another 32% said they would be somewhat committed to helping implement strategies. Two-thirds therefore indicate at least some interest in helping to implement strategies that could benefit the entire Tomahawk business community.

Although indicating willingness to make commitments is much different than actually making and acting on commitments, the survey responses to these questions suggest that it may be worthwhile to pursue collaborative approaches. Willingness to fund such collaborative approaches, perhaps depending on how much money may be required, will vary. There is, however, a substantial enough number of business owners who indicate that they may be willing to at least think about doing so. About 52% say in responses to Question #8 that they would be at least somewhat committed to contributing funding toward such strategies. Combined results from Questions #6, 7, and 8 coupled with open-ended answers to the first five survey questions demonstrate that it is possible that business owners are both willing and able to collaborate with one another and other entities to plan and implement events and marketing programs. It is worth remembering that there may be other owners who did not complete the survey that are willing and able to contribute time and/or money to planning and implementing collaborative strategies.

Question #9 asked: “Over the past few years, would you say that complying with Wisconsin state business regulations has become (please circle one number):”

Respondents were asked to use the following rating scale:

Much More Difficult		No Change		Much Easier
1	2	3	4	5

Results for Question #9 show that most respondents feel that there has been in their view no change in the difficulty of complying with state business regulations. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of those answering the question marked “no change.” Only one of the 73 respondents thought it has become easier to deal with state regulations over the past few years. Another 31% think that it has become more difficult complying with the regulations.

Business and Community Observations:

Questions #10 and #11 asked respondents to rate various business factors in Tomahawk as they currently exist (February 2005) and in terms of importance. For Question #10, respondents were asked to rate each factor using the following scale:

Not Favorable		Neutral		Highly Favorable
1	2	3	4	5

Table 2 on page 7 summarizes the answers for Question #10.

Table 3 below summarizes the answers for Question #11.

Table 3 RATING BUSINESS FACTORS/TERMS OF IMPORTANCE

<i>Rating→</i>	1	2	3	4	5		
	Not Important		Neutral		Extremely Important		
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>						<i>Mean</i>
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓		
Availability of Qualified Labor	3	0	11	28	28		4.11
Availability of Supplies	2	3	21	27	17		3.77
Availability of Credit	0	0	12	25	33		4.30
Cooperative Efforts among Businesses	0	2	11	25	32		4.24
Flexible Store Hours	1	2	14	31	22		4.01
Prices	1	2	11	29	27		4.13
Parking	1	2	21	23	23		3.93
Attractiveness of Stores	1	2	13	28	26		4.09
Popular Anchor Businesses	1	7	14	19	27		3.94
Economic Development	0	0	11	23	34		4.34
Pedestrian Access to Businesses	1	3	19	24	23		3.93
Vehicle Access to Businesses	1	0	13	27	29		4.19
Ability to Expand	0	3	16	28	21		3.99
Appearance of Streets	2	2	16	26	23		3.96
Configuration of Traffic Lights	2	10	12	22	23		3.78
Attractiveness of Sidewalks	1	5	16	25	21		3.88
Business Related Signage	0	3	15	29	21		4.00
Zoning	0	0	17	27	22		4.08
Opportunities for Advertising	0	3	20	16	29		4.04
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A

The results enumerated in Table 3 show that nearly all respondents believe that all these factors are at least somewhat important in helping to foster business creation, retention and expansion in Tomahawk. Economic development achieved the highest mean score. No respondent felt that this factor was anything less than somewhat important. Availability of credit achieved the next highest score. Echoing the

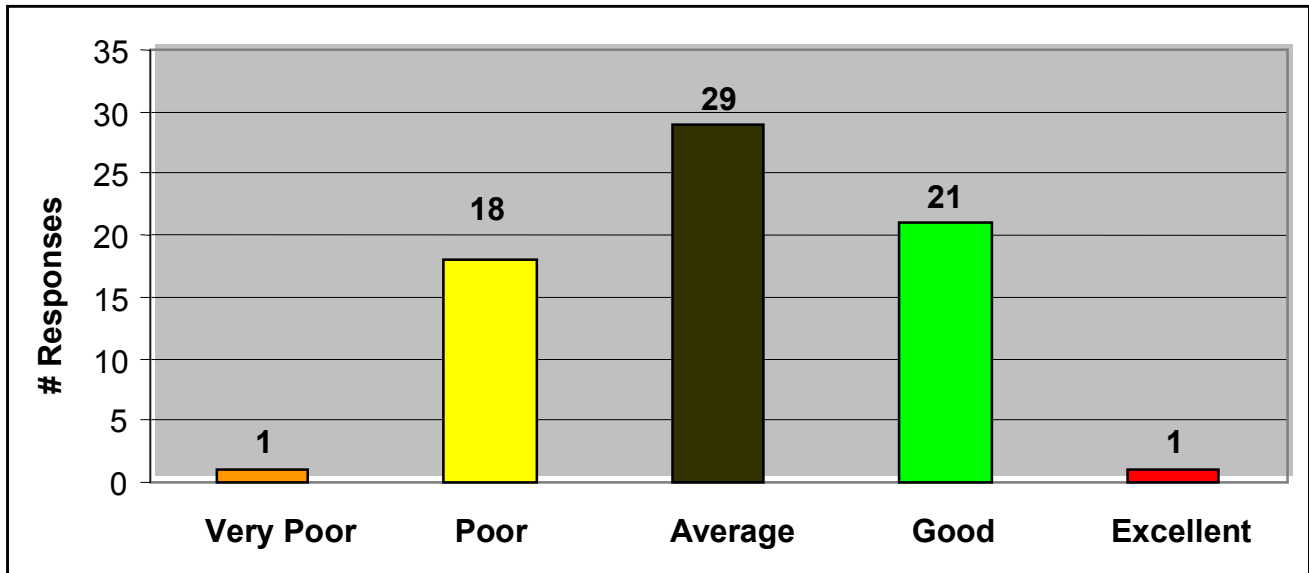
Fourteen of seventeen mean scores were above 4 indicating that nearly all respondents felt that most of these factors are very to extremely important. The combined mean score for all the factors is 4.19. Mean scores ranged from 3.77 to 4.59. Those factors that ranked highest in importance were the attractiveness of the area, chamber of commerce, schools, police protection, and fire protection in descending order.

Question #14 asked respondents to describe the overall business climate in Tomahawk using the following scale:

Very Poor Poor Average Good Excellent

Chart 1

BUSINESS CLIMATE



Seventy-three percent (73%) of those who responded rate the city’s overall business climate at least average suggesting a fairly high degree of satisfaction. However, this still leaves a significant portion (27%) of respondents feeling that the overall business climate is poor or very poor.

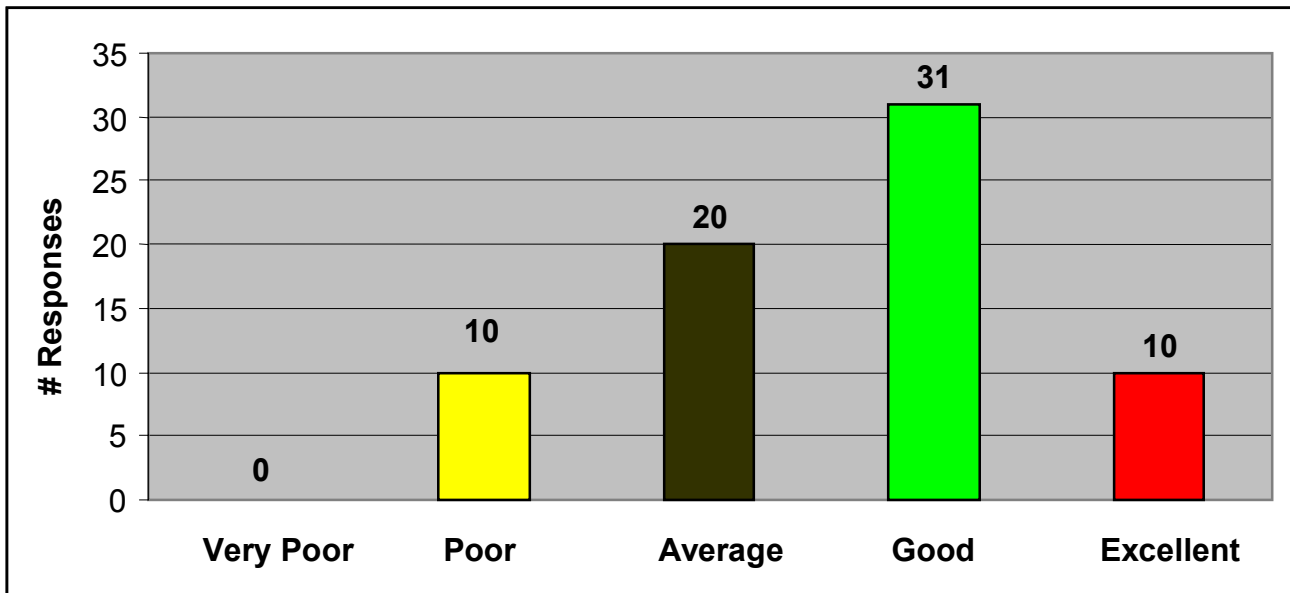
Question #15 asked respondents to describe the community in terms of conducting business using the following scale:

Very Poor Poor Average Good Excellent

The chart at the top of page 12 summarizes the answers.

Chart 2

COMMUNITY AS PLACE TO CONDUCT BUSINESS



Evidence from Charts 1 and 2 tends to reinforce what was indicated by the results outlined in previous tables that respondents have more positive attitudes about the community as a whole in comparison to the business climate. Nearly 86% of the respondents gave the community an average or better than average rating. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of those respondents rated the community either good or excellent. None rated the community very poor.

The following summarizes characteristics of the survey respondents and their businesses (Questions #16-21):

• 90% of the survey respondents own businesses	Question #16
• 69% of the businesses opened between 1980 and 2005 (78% of these were started in the 1980's or 1990's)	Question #17
• 8 businesses started before 1950, 2 as early as 1905	Question #17
• 80% of businesses are owned or leased by Lincoln County residents	Question #18
• 83% of businesses are family owned	Question #19
• 95% of the businesses are owned not leased	Question #20
• 83% or business owners are not considering moving, closing, or selling their business	Question #21

Question #22 asked “If you are moving, closing or selling please tell us why?” Of the 12 who indicated in Question #21 that they are considering moving, closing or selling their business, 10 chose to provide a reason. The responses were as follows:

- “Depending on the next couple of years; we’re not generating enough income.”
- “Moving to a new location in the community.”
- “Slow business, too many expenses, taxes, insurance cost[s] going up.”
- “To try to grow.”
- “Expansion of business.”
- “Just not making enough money. We wanted to buy a bowling alley, not a bar.”
- “Burning out...Need something different.”
- “Our facilities are outgrown and our exposure is not satisfactory.”
- “As soon as I can’t work 6 days per week, 52 weeks of the year.”
- “Retirement.”

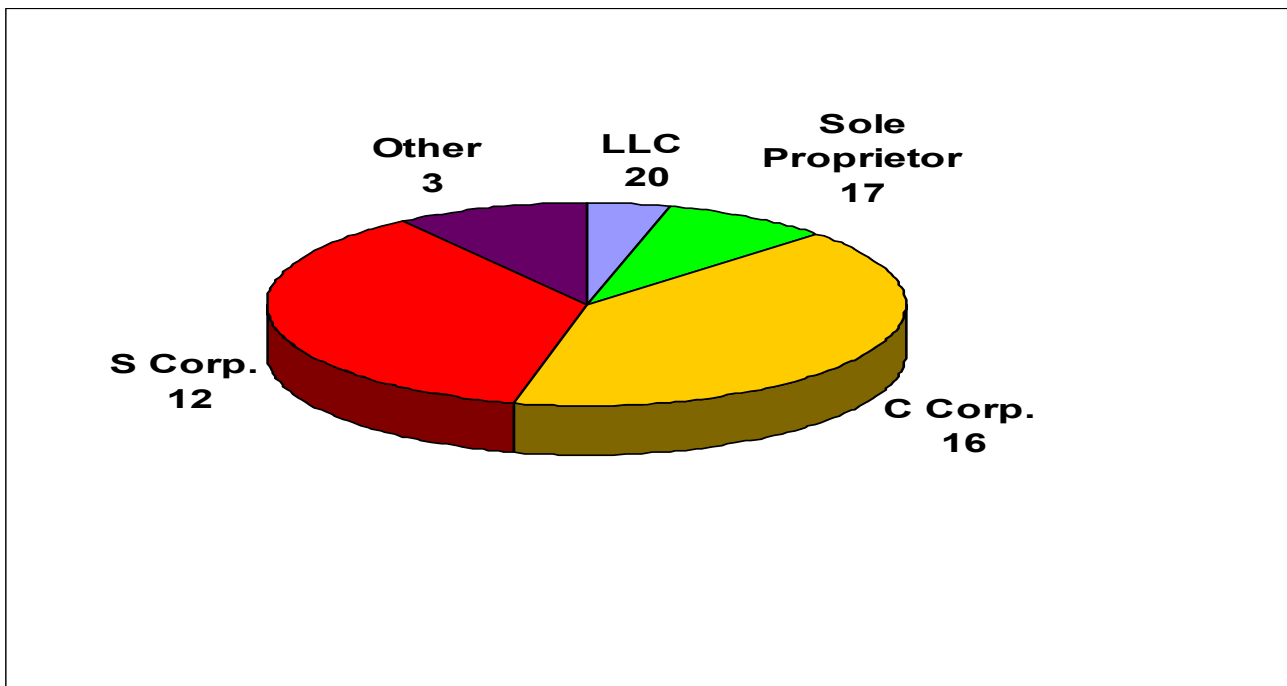
Fifty-nine of the 76 businesses represented in the survey employ 15 or fewer people. The average number of part-time and full-time employees per business is 10.4. The most workers employed in one business is 130. Two businesses reported no employees, while another 34 firms (47%) reported having 1 to 5 employees (Question #23).

Nearly 59% of the respondents indicated that there is room to build on to their facility if needed (Question #24) while slightly over 27% stated that they are thinking of adding space (Question #25). Over half (56%) said that they intended to remodel their facility in the next two years without creating additional space (Question #26).

Question #27 asked participants to designate their business legal structure. A summary of the 68 responses is below.

Chart 3

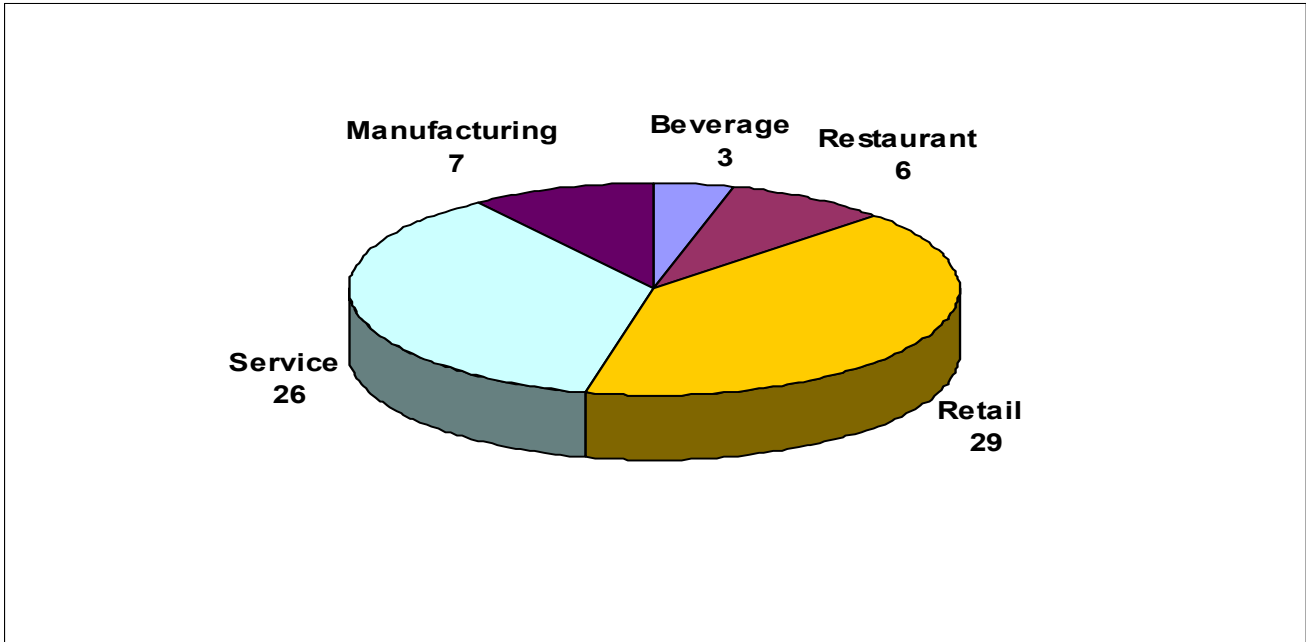
LEGAL STRUCTURE



Question #28 asked respondents to describe the product or service they sell. The pie chart at the top of page 14 summarizes the types of businesses represented.

Chart 4

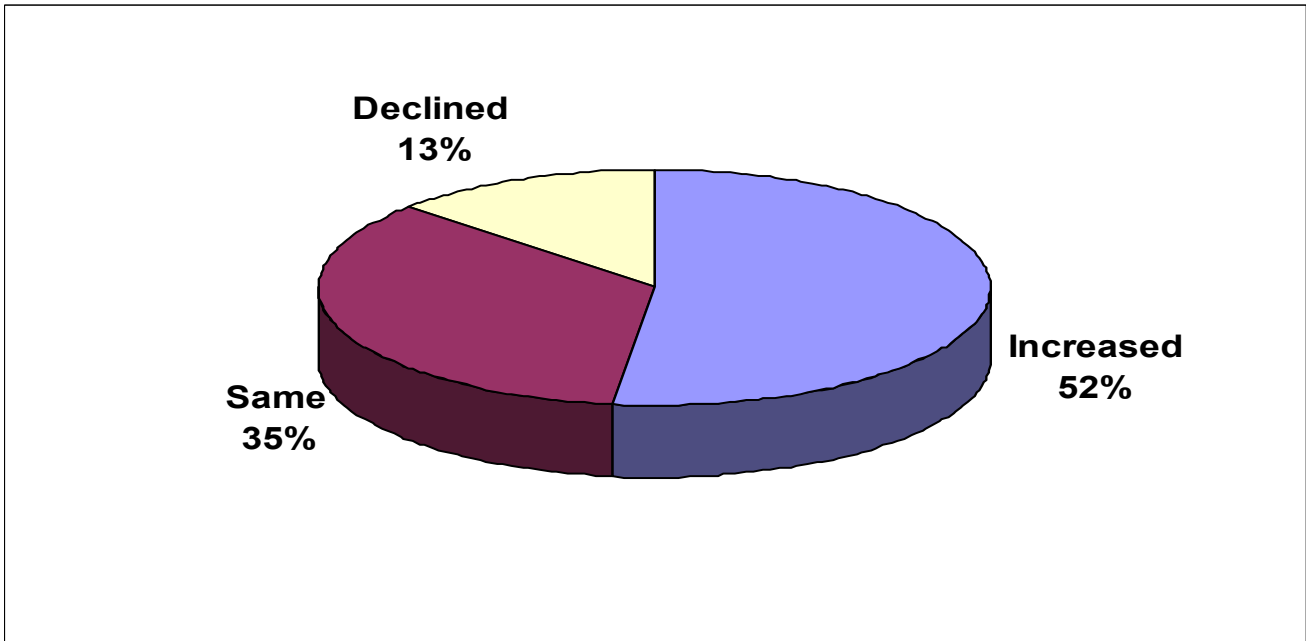
TYPE OF BUSINESS



As the chart below depicts, about 87% of those who responded (69 total) to Question #29 said sales either increased or did not change over the last few years. The local recession in 2001 and 2002 does not appear to have adversely affected these businesses' sales during the period.

Chart 5

**SALES
(Last Three Years)**



Slightly over 46% of the customers that visit the businesses owned or managed by those who completed Question #30 in the survey come from Tomahawk. Respondents estimated that about 27% of their customers come from outside Tomahawk but within the county and about the same percentage from outside of the county. As was mentioned earlier in this report, several survey respondents expressed

concern that local residents often seem to prefer to shop outside of Tomahawk. Statistics relating to this question indicate that over half these businesses' customers come from outside Tomahawk and seem to support the notion that these business owners and managers should be concerned about Tomahawk residents not spending their money in local businesses. On the other hand, this evidence also indicates that businesses are having considerable success attracting customers who live outside the city.

A review of the answers provided for Question #31 suggest that business owners/managers that completed the survey think that much of their competition comes from local firms. Although several mentioned a "big box" store located outside of city limits as a competitor, most did not. A complete list of competitors can be found in Appendix B.

Space was provided in the survey to make additional comments (Question #32). Those comments were:

- "I want it back like it was 5 years ago, years 3-6 were the best. I think [business] declined [due] to a decrease in tourism. People say the place we used to stay [at] closed up so we don't come here anymore."
- "The community needs growth to survive. Jobs, housing and qualified workforce is our biggest concern."
- "We spend lots of money trying to attract the fickle tourist - too unreliable. We lost Outpost Campground, that was as big a blow to our summer business as anything. Sadly nothing replaced it. Refocus on our convenience to our local base and work on getting them back into our businesses."
- "I have the knowledge to make and repair golf clubs. I love it. I do not have marketing skills, as a business run from the home."
- "I didn't answer questions 1-5 -being a home based business with most of that business coming from word of mouth - I don't deal with the same challenges that a business on Main Street or North 4th Street have to deal with. That is also why I was not committed to help on questions 6-9. Again, because I don't deal with the same issues - I don't really know what they might need. I'm sure they are hit quite often with requests for donations - but also see a lot of those same people going out of town to shop. That can be very frustrating. I also don't know how the businesses on Main Street feel about less retail and more service business on Main Street. I don't know how that affects them. I have been very fortunate in my type of business & for the most part the businesses in Tomahawk support me and I in turn support them."
- "People who are in my line of work need to earn a license. At present, any HS dropout can seemingly "be a landscape contractor."
- "I feel Tomahawk is an excellent place to be in business. I believe that the economy and peoples' "bottom dollar" price [makes] shopping [difficult] in these smaller towns. It would be nice to keep Tomahawk's money in Tomahawk. I realize every small town deals with this."
- "This survey is very difficult for me to fill out. As written above, we are 7 miles from Tomahawk. I feel the Chamber and this survey are catering to the businesses in town only. Many activities are geared to enhance the town businesses. I might also mention our business has never received any Chamber Bucks. Furthermore we are located in Oneida County. The zoning restrictions prevent us from expanding. I think we have a

tremendous business for the 5 months we are open but the greatest asset is ‘word of mouth’.”

- “Survey was very well put together and covered a lot of information.”
- “I would love to have a better climate. I believe we need to take the positive (tourism, events) and grow them. Everybody wants retail. To be honest it's too much of a gamble in this town. Locals will not support it. We've seen it time and time again. Example: Wild Heart.”
- “We do not deal with the public. The chamber doesn't do anything to [a]ffect our business. We do not expect it. We only deal with dentists.”
- “Tomahawk needs to move beyond the ‘good ole boy’ attitude and move forward to avoid any further loss of business.”
- “Promote boardwalk business.”
- “We would love to be able to build or own our own building but can't afford and can't find a decent spot for a good price.”
- “Tomahawk is more pleasant to work in than other towns we work in. Improvements have been made in the last 10 years since we have worked here. There is always room for improvement and the programs that exist need to continue ...and maintenance conducted.”
- “Tomahawk must recognize that we are no longer a tourist community. We are mainly a retirement community with industry. With many resorts/campgrounds closing we cater to residents and vacation home owners.”
- “Let’s keep promoting our ...fun City of Tomahawk in the old ways of doing business and let’s keep looking for ways to attract and retain...business in our community. Also we do really need a [large retailer for us to] buy local like a Target, Wal-Mart, K-Mart.”
- “From a real estate point of view our community supports mid to upper range properties and incomes. Entry level homes and business properties under \$100K are in demand with a very limited supply.”
- “I think the Chamber does a good job with Chamber Bucks.”
- “My competition didn't pay a penny in local property or sales tax. They didn't donate anything to local service groups or charities either.”
- “Tomahawk has been good to me.”
- “1)My major concern is to ‘cleanup’ the appearance of downtown storefronts. 2) More upscale housing for the elderly.”
- “Install a set of stop lights at the 4 way stop on N. 4th St. and Somo Ave. before some one gets killed in an accident! It is confusing enough for the locals, and even more so for out of town people; besides the fact, it speaks of "hick" town.”

- “Grants for everybody!”

Summary and Conclusions

Although it appears that there is little widespread support among survey respondents for the creation of formal business collaboratives to address concerns about business retention and expansion in Tomahawk, there is enough evidence to support the conclusion that many businesses want to find ways to work together to plan and implement marketing strategies and community events that include businesses as participants. Thirty-nine percent of those who responded to Question #3 (“What specific initiatives administered by a collaboration of Tomahawk businesses could help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?”) indicated support for business collaborations. Several who answered this question also mentioned specific ways business, government and other entities could work together on events and marketing. Survey respondents seem somewhat committed to helping plan and taking time out of their busy schedules to implement strategies that could improve the city’s business climate. They are less willing to provide funding for such programs, although there are clearly more than a few business owners/managers who are likely to help finance collaborative endeavors.

Survey results indicate that the respondents have more positive attitudes about the community as a whole than they do about the city’s business climate. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the respondents gave the community an average or above average rating while only seventy-three percent (73%) did the same for business climate. Business owners/managers believing in and genuinely liking their community is often the first step toward creating an environment in which small businesses can thrive.

While sales have increased or stayed about the same over the past few years for many business owners that completed the survey, many respondents are concerned about local residents shopping outside of town. About a quarter of those completing the survey directly referred to locals actively seeking better prices and selection outside Tomahawk city limits. Respondents estimated that over half of their customers come from outside Tomahawk. There is clearly concern among the respondents that not enough locals are being attracted. Whether this concern is shared by those owners/managers who did not complete surveys is debatable. Further studies may be needed to determine just how widespread the concern is.

Most respondents believe that both the local chamber and government can do more to recruit and keep businesses in Tomahawk. About 17% of respondents praised the chamber and 16% the government for their current business retention, recruitment, expansion, and promotion efforts.

Overall, survey results demonstrate that there are certainly enough positive things happening in Tomahawk that could, with the right kind of cultivation, markedly improve the city’s already strong business climate in the years to come. Improvement that raises the level of success of most Tomahawk businesses will likely only come if and when a diverse group of proactive business owners, chamber staff, local government officials and residents choose to work together to promote the community as a great place to live, work, and shop.

APPENDIX A

Comments for Questions #1-5

Comments/Question #1

- People know you. Your word and a handshake are good enough. Trust is there.
- People - Tomahawk offers 4 season entertainment and activities
- It is a nice area to have a business.
- Support local businesses, support local clubs, groups etc.
- Service, friendliness - people are fun, nice, and helpful.
- Friendly service, word of mouth, advertising works well because of the small community. a. good work ethic b. company treated well c. good transportation system.
- Providing a service to tourists
- Small community, work with home town people.
- Less travel time, benefit to the community
- The Chamber Bucks is a great huge thing for my business. We take in an average of probably \$700 - 1500 a month in the chamber bucks. A great school system. A great community to raise kids. Good Churches, great atmosphere in the area with laws, water, lakes and woods.
- More personal small community - everyone knows everybody. Friendly atmosphere. Doing business in Tomahawk keeps the money in town - benefits all the businesses in Tomahawk.
- Friendly people, great workforce, convenience, safe small town environment.
- I live here, work out of my home. I make and repair golf clubs and I love the game of golf myself.
- Most people are honest, small town atmosphere, workers have good work ethics, strong local economy, city has good infrastructure and provides adequate services and resources.
- Friendly people with local community pride.
- Local - no driving, personal attention.
- Friendly people, honest people.
- Less travel time, friendlier people to work with who are more understanding of immediate needs.
- Word of mouth in a small town really helps bring in business.
- Knowing the people knowing Tomahawk - being a lifelong resident – loving the community and area.
- Small, friendly home town atmosphere.
- A lot of small town loyalty still exists.
- People are friendly, trusting and generally cooperative.
- Although a majority of our business is done outside the Tomahawk area, the business that is done in the area has several positive aspects; a) For the most part our customers truly appreciate our attention to service and detail. I think this for the most part is lost in larger metropolitan areas. B) Many of the other businesses work well together with us. We help out other lumber yards in our

town and in return they help us when it's needed. This is a bonus to all of our customers.

- I personally shop in Tomahawk (not 100%) my favorite places are Nelson's County Market which is a neat, clean store and has a great variety with modest prices. I also like Ben Franklin for the family - like atmosphere and great choices. I believe we have the best radio station (WJJQ) around. I do use them for advertising in a limited way.
- Good people, a clean and safe downtown.
- Small town friendliness.
- Helpful, courteous employees 2) Close proximity/access.
- Small town - friendly people.
- Being a small community people know who you are and you know other business owners. More affordable to do business in Tomahawk - would have support of other Tomahawk businesses.
- Very tight and supportive community, local people loyal to area businesses. Beautiful area and recreation options.
- Small town friendly atmosphere, many people know each other, good attitude toward tourists and visitors, city government friendly to businesses and visitors, city and county police friendly to visitors (not overly aggressive).
- Tourism (lots), many events to generate \$, excellent positive chamber!!
- Keeping money in town. 2) Supporting our fellow community members. 3) Not having to travel. 4) Being able to obtain service locally.
- Shopping locally, local service
- Friendly local people, location good as close to needs
- Friendly people, less distance to travel, Our prices are very competitive.
- Small town atmosphere.
- The small town friendliness. Tourism during the summer. Large events held here, Harley Weekend, 4th of July.
- Local regulars, home town, radio station, beautification of downtown.
- Small town, the people, attractive Main Street.
- Quality of life in general.
- Location, people.
- Friendly People, wide sidewalks, clean streets.
- Tomahawk has a warm welcoming attitude. The area has many transplanted residents and this must contribute to the open door feel.
- Steady business mix of industry base and some tourism.
- None
- Located in area where forestry work is available.
- Home town pride, working with your neighbors, minimal drive time.
- Personal attention from owners. Friendly service.

- We are part of the community, the school system, local celebrations, community events.
- Friendly people, good prices for small town, easy to get to stores.
- A large manufacturing base for a small town.
- Small town atmosphere, knowing most of the townspeople and vendors.
- Convenience, social interaction.
- The people are kind and friendly.
- A positive business attribute. Of business & industry - generally a good local government - Mayor, council etc. Schools, hospital, clinic - good relationship with other business owners.
- Small town atmosphere, merchants tend to work together, no big box stores in town.
- Our chamber is great. Business owners are all friendly and easy to deal with.
- Knowing the business owners personally. Knowing that their business is their bread and butter. If we don't support local businesses they would have to close. Nice not to have to take the time to drive out of town if what we need is right here in Tomahawk.
- Small town atmosphere allows [you to] know most of your customers by name.
- The small town "community support" strong local schools/Nicolet college.
- Small town atmosphere - everyone knows everyone. Personalize services becomes norm not exception. Diverse customer base - because of strong mfr. presence and healthy outdoor recreational opportunities. Good news, bad news - bad news is there are a lot of big box stores surrounding us - good news is that they are not here.
- Small town everyone knows you.
- Helping out other businesses in supporting this town.
- Environment, property costs.

Comments/Question #2

- Lack of white collar job opportunities means lack of white collar higher income residents with greater disposable incomes.
- Rumors, small town talk, they don't like the owners they won't come, etc.
- Weather can affect # of people visiting. Many small business owners -hard to keep staff (No insurance benefits).
- Too many rules on having vendors come in to the events. Charging fees that are too high. Catering to some and hurting others. We have a downtown parking problem. Workers, tenants parking on the streets.
- Competing with prices and inventory
- There is nothing to draw people here - I need people in my store to survive. When we had the hardware store and dome store, we had more traffic. Tourists don't go beyond the bridge. Need more restaurants and shops. No need to come down with Nelson's conglomerate - grocery, floral, pharmacy, Ben Franklin.
- Small community needs to depend on tourists. (Our service is geared to the community and outlying areas). Most businesses are retail and need more customers to be successful. Parking is limited,

especially during events.

- Being able to hire enough qualified people. Police dept. not very helpful with security issues.
- Area residents don't shop locally.
- Lack of local customers.
- We are very dependent on the weather in our business and must have snow in winter and sun and hot humid weather in summer.
- Hard for small businesses to grow because too many of one business. Not enough variety of businesses. Network more with other businesses to collaborate with prices etc. services.
- Attitude that you have to go to bigger town to shop.
- It's a small town, need to go outside of Tomahawk to get enough business.
- Business climate tends to be seasonal, high taxes, HS graduates have inadequate job skills
- Customer leaving the area because of lack of selection. Perception that prices are higher in Tomahawk.
- *Customer flow, *people are trained to go to Wausau or Rhinelander.
- Government willingness to listen. Rules that are over restrictive, taxes.
- Some growth and competition is healthy, not bad. Existing businesses need to allow others in to grow the town nor remain stagnant.
- Less potential customers.
- Depend so much on seasonal visitors
- Lower prices from competition by being so close to larger market areas like Rhinelander and Wausau. People will easily drive an hour or more to save a few bucks.
- Some people (new comers) feeling that because this is a small town they must travel distances to obtain goods and services.
- People in general are "bottom line" driven. They want the personal service that is offered in Tomahawk, but are not willing to pay for it. It's tough competing with the "Big boxes" even though they are a considerable distance from tomahawk. Our City Fathers seem to hold back the growth of Tomahawk. Tomahawk is no longer a destination for most people, whether "they" are tourist or business. The development of the four land highways have given people easier, more rapid access to the "Great Northwoods" and in doing so has allowed them to explore areas to the north of us. This has made tomahawk a gas or meal stop on their trip north. Tomahawk needs to be a "Destination" once again.
- Sorry, I don't know how successful any business is in Tomahawk. I am satisfied with our business but we are not in Tomahawk.
- Trying to keep a good product at a fair price. When trying to keep up with your chain stores. Wal-Mart, Shopko, County Market.
- "Price-shopping" out of town. People wanting to maintain privacy from other locals, holding on to "status quo".
- Ability to keep various inventory prices at a competitive price with larger retail stores.
- Insurance

- Have a limited customer base. Have to capture local business and have to capture tourist business.
- Finding enough work force for our type of business.
- Lack of promotion by city and chamber of commerce for city as a whole as well as for special events. Lack of signage on freeways promoting Tomahawk. Several businesses "bulldozing" others to their own advantage when planning special events. Some goods and services are difficult to get here. Residents and visitors often have to go to surrounding areas such as Wausau, Rhinelander or Merrill to find what they can't get here.
- Kids loitering downtown, lack of "atmosphere" downtown, should have more billboards on 51, not enough retail downtown, too many offices, not supported by other businesses, shop locally
- Downtown is not attractive as other cities.
- Trying to match? With big guy.
- Lot of people leave in winter competition.
- Cost of services and goods (repairs, etc). City lack of cooperation in allowing development, i.e., near Comfort Inn. Cost of advertising. Lack of city promoting area business.
- In our business it would be out of town competition coming into our town and selling to our locals at lower rates.
- The amount of non retail stores located on Main Street. The decrease of non retail stores.
- Loss of old business.
- Competition from bigger towns with more shopping to offer.
- Inertia in city government - lack of progressive attitude, foresight.
- Slow economy.
- Not enough parking - kids hanging out on streets. Snow removal is difficult because there is no place to put it. Closing the streets for things like Harley - Let vendors be at Sarah park not downtown. Our celebrations revolve around beer and the bars!
- I don't see significant barriers. Seasonal quiet business periods seem to affect our customers.
- Property taxes in town of Bradley and changing demographic of customer as Tomahawk changes from tourism to vacation home area.
- Climate a little harsh for bare root nursery.
- Competitive pricing, Competing with bigger markets that people are willing to drive to. Ex. Merrill Rhinelander and Wausau, Startup business - cost of obtaining a building is quite high (N. 4th St.) and downtown pricing is better but buildings usually need major repairs/updates.
- High property taxes. Seasonality fluctuation. Local people are used to shopping out of town.
- High taxes (property), competition that pays no taxes in our taxing area.
- Can't beat Wal-Mart, menards, etc.
- Downtown tomahawk not enough parking in this day and age buildings to close together.
- Coming up with a business that will draw people to a small town.
- Insurance, taxes, qualified workers.
- I don't feel ????? Are any as long as you decide to yourself to ????? Your business successful.

- As a downtown merchant and the way the traffic comes into town from by pass on Hwy. 86-D some tourists, newcomers don't realize there is a downtown. Locals tend to shop out of town first. Less and less retail stores. High cost of health care discourages people to stay in business or open a new business, if they are self-employed and do not have a spouse with good benefits.
- As a business owner I must also support my fellow business owners. If I purchase an item from a business in town and a customer asks where I got it, I always let them know that it came from in town.
- Poor negative attitudes by many local customers in regard to selection, price of mdse. Offered by businesses, high real estate taxes.
- Lack of significant population growth, competition from "big box" stores with in easy driving distance.
- Small Business Apathy - When relying on tourism, can have many outside influences affect customer base which have little control over. - Getting business community to focus on working together - seeing your role as a retailer go from main source to convenience - it is very expensive to be in business today.
- Don't know of any.
- Air transportation, remote location.

Comments/Question #3

- Smoke free work environments/restaurants and bars.
- "Taste of Tomahawk" event.
- Continue year round events - group insurance rates?
- We need to have more winter events, 4 wheeler people to come and stay around here, not just snowmobilers.
- Survey is good place to start. TDBC [Tomahawk Downtown Business Committee] is step in right direction, but don't have tools and resources.
- More city initiated events that draw tourists to Tomahawk. Look into grants or other available grants to help businesses fix up and improve the outside and inside décor. Parking is an issue, need more areas of parking.
- Training consortium, [continue] improving commercial trash hauling, improving school to work programs, adequate housing options for employees.
- No ideas at this time.
- People have to be informed that if they don't use local merchants, they won't have local merchants down the road.
- Always be willing to try something new and let's not always stay in a rut or the same old thing. The only way you grow is by getting out of the box.
- Meeting of business owners (specific) (businesses) to get together to talk about pricing - direction businesses want to go and move ahead. Wants to participate in meetings with other businesses.
- "America in Bloom" [is] a friendly competition between cities and towns of a similar size. It fosters involvement and good will between govt., business and private sector while beautifying our town thru improvements in landscaping, urban forestry, parks etc.

- How to get my business advertised most efficiently 2) Piggy back with other business and to share expenses or complement each business maybe a small business mall in a building similar to the old town mall with one person hired to represent the small businesses that rent a stall,
- could rent vacant building on main street.
- Work with elected officials to reduce the tax burdens to business owners and homeowners. Form coalition of business and industry leaders to challenge school board to change curriculum allowing the HS graduate to be more productive when entering the work environment.
- "Shop Tomahawk" public education program. Feature a local business for recognition.
- Need to revamp the downtown. Service businesses off Main Street and promote retail. Make it a destination.
- Unified approach to all in #2
- Like to Tomahawk downtown business group also need to help grow North 4th Street and the perimeters of the town near freeway.
- Not sure.
- Make the town more inviting - signage on outskirts of town/hwys and give downtown a facelift. We need more appeal.
- Joint advertising to shop local.
- Coordinate hours, be willing to lose some independence - many businesses have an "it's all about me" attitude.
- Involvement in the Chamber of Commerce is the first that comes to mind. Not just being a member, but actually getting involved to see what the chambers oppositions actually are. Expansion of the Tomahawk Downtown Business Counsel. This group has done some wonderful things for the downtown area, many of which have spilled benefits over into many of the other areas of Tomahawk.
- If small businesses cannot succeed it is not only [a] local concern, but all entities of government are holding out their hands e.g. unemployment insurance - FUTA. We have part time employees who never collect unemployment and never have. Wisconsin Valley Improvement annually draws down the waters of Lake Nokomis which has some effect on our boat traffic.
- During special events there are so many outside vendors that it takes away from the local businesses
- Emphasis on local service rather than price - we have local experts in many fields - they don't have to be 200 miles away to be experts.
- Cooperative advertising to help promote your business and promotion of Tomahawk and the area. Limited financial base. Need continual flow of income in area. Based on tourism. Promote industrial base to entice new manufacturing businesses.
- Training may be in conjunction with Nicolet.
- More participation by businesses, both monetary and personnel, in special events and programs designed to bring visitors to Tomahawk. More participation in the Downtown Business counsel to help plan and implement events, etc. More awareness by businesses that whatever is good for Tomahawk "as a whole" will also help their own businesses in the long run. Simply because a particular event/program doesn't directly benefit a business doesn't mean that business won't benefit indirectly through the success of Tomahawk as a whole.
- I think by having all retail downtown, but how?? It takes money to open a business and take that risk.
- Create a type of theme for all store fronts. (log, etc.) 2) Long hours, especially on Saturday. People

from out of town come up and businesses close at 12 or 3 pm

- Keep prices competitive.
- Letting large chain stores in Tomahawk.
- Promote Tomahawk and our businesses (we should not be referred to as gateway to the north - we want people to stop here and shop here. Promote business expansion. People in and outside our community need to know what is available here.
- In our case none of the above.
- Asking for help rather than expecting volunteers to come forward. Our projects ... would have more help if they came out and asked specific people to donate their time.
- Street sales, example Crazy Days.
- More cooperative business hours, more promotions?
- Seek new retail, even if it means adding competition. Their competition now is out of town. More choices in town would be better for everyone.
- Qualified labor.
- More advertising in a wider range of the State and neighboring states. Web sites not just for chamber members. When you are a small business and can't afford much.
- Downtown beautification efforts and annual events etc. are outstanding. Support by businesses is good to great. Continue this work.
- None for us.
- Have not encountered/experienced any to suggest.
- One day event sales. I.E. ridiculous day.
- Get health insurance fixed. 2) If you earn your money in/from this taxing district, spend it in this taxing district.
- Stop by all businesses to see what they have to offer, before going out of town.
- Jointly improving the appearance of downtown Tomahawk (especially storefronts).
- Tourists, Harley MDA weekend, 4th of July.
- Retail recruitment, Storefront improvement projects - grants or no interest loans. Encourage employees to shop locally first.
- Collaborative effort to get the stores and homes located in the main thoroughfare to clean up and spruce up. Get all stores to set some shopping hours that are convenient for customers. We are open 18 hours/day, 7 days a week. You have to be open hours for customers to shop.
- Businesses could join together to provide learning opportunities for new business owners. (i.e. bookkeeping, web development)
- Strong, visible, educational facility, of good academics and athletics. Imagery is very important - need better marketing strategies. 1) promote strengths, assortment, ability to cater to special requests 2) Use price promotion to help individual business take advantage of best lines. 3) Need to promote entire community. 4) Remind local people how important having a strong infrastructure is jobs, tax base, convenience.
- Don't know of any.

- None that I am aware of.

Comments/Question #4

- Bring back the health insurance for small business owners and employers at a reasonable rate. Keeping their web site updated (regarding snowmobile reports).
- Doing a great job.
- We have been loosing out on our street sale and other activities that bring in people. Our car show weekend was a major event! I somehow feel somewhere that town is thinking these events are too bothersome.
- Good step with this survey
- Work on the parking issues. Examples: In the winter the snow is piled in the middle of the streets which then cuts parking in half. Most people will not walk across a snow bank or down a block in cold weather. During events, surrounding areas of downtown are closed, leaving people to walk blocks. People would rather not.
- Find means to attract more manufacturing applicants to area.
- No ideas at this time.
- Create an aggressive program. Use them or loose them.
- I believe the chamber is doing a good job, as long as they keep looking to improve and grow as a chamber and a community.
- Chamber is doing a good job already.
- More brainstorming and networking like this and ... meetings that bring people together with a common cause and goals.
- Have small business expo reasonably priced to showcase and familiarize potential customers with who you are;...have prizes, handout samples. WJJQ sport show; too expensive for this small a business (but is a wonderful event!)
- Continue sales and customer relations training programs. Sponsor business management training programs. Sponsor effective marketing training programs.
- Resource for small business for growth and expansion. Help small business with SMA info, grant info etc. Lobby with local government to help bring in other small business to the community.
- More research on particular bus/subjects.
- Our chamber does a nice job.
- They need a larger budget. After donating the labor to remove old and replace with new landscaping. No one maintained it. (Back in 2003) the place needs to be more noticeable and accommodating.
- It may be impossible - but - somehow make it easier for Tomahawk money to stay in Tomahawk.
- Expand hours.
- Promote Tomahawk as a destination for people and business. Work closer with the City Council, in order to promote the growth of Tomahawk and the surrounding areas.

- The local chamber does not really aid my business per se. I am sure that many activities bring business to the downtown. Note: I feel small businesses...being seasonal are paying very much for membership in the chamber.
- The chamber does a great job of getting events and putting all the things together. They need more banners across the streets and other radio stations in the area.
- One-source listing of calendar of events that all businesses and organizations coordinate with. Service and convenience can outweigh minor cost savings of buying out of town.
- They use to give out non chamber names - better advertising for contractors.
- Worry about the stability of chamber. Personal turnover, more member recruitment = more money - more promotion of what chamber does and what they stand for. Chamber has PR problem.
- Too fair, recruitment of seasoned and full time employees.
- Increase the promotion of Tomahawk businesses/events in other areas/communities through outside advertising (TV, radio, media), Assist in acquiring and maintaining good signage on freeway promoting Tomahawk. Work towards acquiring grants for small businesses, both government and private. Stronger promotion of Chamber Bucks rather than gift certificates from Wal-Mart, etc.
- I love the chamber. I don't need to follow the local scene as much or...because they have such a competent staff taking care of it.
- Not familiar with current agenda.
- More promotion on tourism
- Stop giving away free food. I.E. venison ..., Thurs. night Harley brat feed.
- Be more active in seeking businesses to settle in Tomahawk.
- I think they are doing about as much as they can.
- Personal visits! I would appreciate a face to face visit rather than [a] phone call or monthly news letter. Promoting Tomahawk as a whole rather than just the businesses.
- Promote new retail.
- Better communication on what is going on in the area so possibly the downtown could coordinate a promotion with the events (sporting events, etc). More events, all events are lumped into 4th of July.
- It would be nice if Chamber Bucks could be redeemed at all stores and chambers dues were less for really small 2 person businesses. A visit from chamber people now and then would at least make it look like they cared.
- I have no ideas or complaints.
- None for us.
- Unsure what is happening currently to help attract new business to the area.
- Promote "Off Season" events i.e. snowmobile races.
- Promote, with the vigor that your job - life depended on it, spend your income where your property/school taxes are paid.
- Advertise Tomahawk as a main place to be, not the gateway city.
- Continue to pursue ideas from local business owners/townspeople such as this survey.
- You're doing a great job.

- Do more retail recruiting. Encourage local shopping first.
- I think they are doing a great job. I do believe that it is not an easy job to have.
- Provide seminars on small business management, seminars on web development.
- Have seen retail stores close downtown, replaced with service outlets - to me that is bad. Get promotional/business orgs. more "fired up" to do special events/promos. Great volunteer ethic in Tomahawk - revolves around parents support for youth. Can this be tapped into? #3 & 4 from question 3.
- Don't know
- Use similar survey and survey the public! Businesses can't supply or know what public wants or how public feels about shopping in Tomahawk.
- Doing what they can locally and not send the money out of this community. They let a huge chunk of money leave this community. That hurt each and every one of us business owners (close to 40,000).
- None that I could think of.

Comments/Question #5

- Does the local government have issues with Harley weekend? (re: policing for minor offenses) when Harley is huge contributor to this community year round!
- Doing a good job.
- Don't see a lot of restricting - didn't have issues with loitering. City Council is pretty lenient - they are doing their part.
- Provide more start-up, operating etc. grants and loans to help in start-up, operating and maintenance funding. Especially during the winter months when business is slow.
- Slow down growth in personal taxes
- No ideas at this time
- N/A
- Maybe a little more aggressive in recruiting and lets be on the same page and all work for the better of the community and I think the business will come ????? Necessary
- Broaden their thinking - allow new businesses to come into town - relax or restructure zoning.
- Be more involved with chamber and businesses to work as a cohesive group
- review signage rules.
- Provide a safer shopping environment in downtown business district by enforcing local ordinances (i.e. - loitering)
- Cooperation is presently good. However, the Dept of Public works should try to work with businesses to help them.
- Local government needs to realize that in order to have a healthy business community they need to help the downtown. They need to rezone to allow growth for small business. They may need to provide low interest loans to allow small business to revamp or remodel buildings.

- They have to take on a "self employed" mentality.
- Help with possible grants. Build rather than obstruct expansion/tax base.
- Stop vocal minorities from stopping expansions.
- Efficiency
- Somehow crack down on businesses to improve faces and appearance of their buildings.
- Does a pretty good job already. Use the forum on WJJQ (9:30 on Tues, Thur or maybe it's daily to inform & just relate with the people of Tomahawk. It's a great service that JJQ provides.
- Local government needs to see the need for Tomahawk to grow. Tomahawk has stagnated, and it seems that this is what our City Fathers want. It goes back to Tomahawk becoming a destination, not just a convenience store.
- The school district and town of Nokomis can control the expenses which are causing property taxes to go to extremes.
- Make sure during construction phases that all business have easy exit and entry access, and be finished on time.
- Be more flexible and innovative
- Taxes
- Taxes, stop doing contractors work, treat everybody the same, do more with tax base people in city
- Creation of more business zoning. Not much room to expand. Nowhere for businesses to expand or create new businesses.
- I feel we are fortunate with our current local government.
- Assist in acquiring/maintaining signage on freeway promoting tomahawk. Continued and increased assistance, both in personnel & financially, in local events. Assist in acquiring grants for local businesses. Assistance in advertising/promoting Tomahawk through the media. Greater attention to removing eye sores such as abandoned buildings, etc. to present a better image of Tomahawk. Be open to and assist in acquiring larger business in Tomahawk. Small businesses often spring up around larger business. Larger businesses also contribute to the general health of the community through increased jobs and services, thereby helping all businesses.
- I see the mayor in my business once a year and have never seen any council people. Share on them, they act like residents are the only people!
- Provide a youth center for the young people. Keep parents and children in town. Not familiar with things that may be in the works.
- Stop lite at 4 way flasher.
- Promote new retails to area.
- Promote Tomahawk.
- Not sure.

- Require some store fronts to maintain a certain level of cleanliness.
- Preventing our downtown from becoming all services rather than retail.
- Tax breaks, hotel/motel with large indoor water park. Business in area west of Sara Park. Promotions.
- More event cooperation especially local law enforcement seems to be against any promotion for downtown that requires any effort on the part of law enforcement.
- Be more willing to work with retail community, not just industry. They have the attitude that "bring industry and retail will take care of itself." Not true. Recognize that the by-pass area should be developed to help Tomahawk. When Hwy. 29 went around Abbottsford the area immediately mushroomed. We're approaching 20 years since 51 by passed Tomahawk and we still haven't done much.
- Reduce taxes
- More parking - more affordable financing a place to expand - no women based benefits. Help knowing what to do for things like accountants and better understanding of tax laws etc.
- We have found the permitting process for business signage to be fair and flexible; and not expensive as in other towns. Tomahawk is business friendly and does not have excessive barriers.
- Be more receptive to information presented by appraisers.
- None that I know.
- Not personally aware of any to comment on. Support/Foster more recreational/tourist/service businesses.
- Property taxes are too high. Do street repairs and maintenance at non-peak business times. Need to open development of Hwy. D - 86 areas.
- Need to be more business minded.
- Get health insurance fixed.
- I think they are doing just fine.
- I think government is doing all it can to help the people.
- Condemn unsightly buildings, Noll's Tap, Langers Restaurant, HyRyder Bldg.
- Insurance is hard for the small business owner. A group insurance plan would be beneficial.
- Don't penalize local businesses during special events - i.e. vendor fees.
- Support local events - special events
- They seem to be doing a good job for the size of the community we have.
- If they have not already, perhaps there is grant \$ available to help a downtown stay active.

- Always felt local government was very supportive of various requests - lines of communication are open - it is a two way street - before something can't be done, it has to be requested and discussed.
- We are not out of Tomahawk. We are between Rhinelander and Tomahawk.

APPENDIX B

List of Businesses' Competitors

Comments/Question #31

- T's Roadhouse, Tomahawk Bowling Alley, Cockateels, Corine's Cantina
- Bootleggers
- Larger facilities
- Nelson's Floral, floral end - Target and Pier One - Gift end
- Tomahawk Childcare - St. Marys preschool/4 yr. Kindergarten, Headstart, family day cares. Even though these facilities may be competitors, we get along great and do referrals to each other, if our program does not meet their needs or if we are full.
- A & B Process systems, Stratford, WI - Apache Stainless, Beaver Dam, WI - Paul Mueller Co., Springfield, MO - ITT Precision Stainless, Springfield, MO
- Joan's embroidery, Olde Towne Mall, Standard Mercantile
- Anyone in our line of business
- Gander Mountain, Fleet Farm, Walmart, Aquatic Arts, Do It Express, Kracker Barrel
- Vieguts self serve market. Holdiay gas station, Zepher gas station, crossroads mobile, Self serve
- Great Northern Hair, Cost Cutters
- Big box store, leisure activities and businesses that compete for customer limited time
- Other club makers
- Mortgage companies, regional banks and credit unions, brokerage firms
- Sedlak - Minoqua, Rhineland GM - Rhinlander, Stark GM - Merrill
- Other insurance agencies
- N/A only other competitor is in Wausau
- None in Tomahawk - appraisal and forestry firms from the lake states region
- Other real estate office in and surrounding Tomahawk
- I'm not sure - there are a lot of embroidered shirts out there - but don't know exactly who does them: examples - Nelson's County Market, Heritage, Tomahawk School district. I do know artisans of Glen Flora have items in standard mercantile and Ben Franklin
- Birchfield Nursery

- Auto glass specialists, Triumph Auto Glass
- No competition in help care! (except insurance companies)
- I don't feel that living and doing business 7 miles from Tomahawk, I have key competitors but in a limited way, businesses that sell ice cream might be considered a competitor (e.g.) Dairy Queen
- McDonalds, Dairy Queen, Subway, Pizza Hut, Bambinos, Dog Pound
- Manson Ins. CIS Group, State Farm, American Family
- All other local chiropractic offices
- Tomahawk lumber, tomahawk builder supply, Menards, Home Depot
- All other plumbers, everyone that sells plumbing fixtures
- McDonalds, Dairy Queen, Subway, Dog & Suds
- Wisconsin Log Homes - Green Bay WI, Wilderness Log Homes, Phymouth, WI
- Northern Beer, Mercantile, Old Town Mall, Cover to Cover, Used furniture outlets in Wausau.
- Bowling Alley - none. Too many bars in this town!
- None
- Erv's Sales and Service, Link Bros. In Minong, Tomahawk Parts Center
- Pine Tree Restaurant, Family Restaurant
- Rhinelander Memorials, Wausau Monument, Norde Memorial, Merrill Memorial
- Carquest, NAPA, US Oil Co.
- Minoqua, Other antique shops open during the summer in Tomahawk
- Nelson's Co. Market (in town), Cheese Board (In Minoqua)
- WJJQ, Hodag shopper, Foto news
- Midstate Contracting, Stainless Specialists, August Winters, Tweet Garot
- Ben Franklin - cover to cover books, Walmart, JoAnns Fabrics, Hancock Fabrics, Karen Quilt Corner and Quilt cottage (Rhinelander and Minocqua respectively)
- Graphic House (Wausau), Wausau Signs, Cleveland Signs (Rhinelander), Signpost (Rhinelander)
- Golf: Edgewater, Pinewood, Northwoods - Fitness: Curves, snowmobiling, drinking, Banquet: Comfort Inn, Charles cheese Shop, Hazelhurst
- Fleet Farm, Gander Mountain
- Steigerwalt in Tomahawk. Any bare root nurseries in Lake states and east. State bare root

nurseries.

- Other real estate firms. E properties, Century 21 Best Way, First Weber, Merrill, Vacationland, Pt North, Coldwell Banker - Julleady - Rhinelander
- Saveway, Orkin, Gene's
- IGA, Walmart
- Walmart, Home Depot, Menards, Fleet Farm
- None in the area
- Carquest and all auto parts stores
- Other building contractors
- Mechanical Inc. in Tomahawk, somewhat - Nimsgran Steel, Minocqua - Steel Structures, Mosinee - Custom Steel, Wausau
- Rhinelander clothing stores, Wausau clothing stores, Appleton clothing stores
- Town & Country Realty, E-Properties North, Coldwell Banker Mulleady
- JB's New Creations
- Holiday Station, 3P Amaco, Vieguts Mobil, Crossroads Mobile, Zepher
- Tomahawk Community Bank, F & M Bank
- Me, Myself & I. Need to be able to be positive, stay on top of trends, have what customer wants at fair price - simple model - don't always do a good job of implementation.
- Don't have any competitors enough work for everyone
- Ace Hardware, Vieguts, Menards, Home Depot - Rhinelander
- N/A
- Caterpillar, John Deere: Const. Equip.

APPENDIX C

TOMAHAWK SMALL BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION SURVEY

Prepared by
Art Lersch
University of Wisconsin Extension, Lincoln County

With assistance from
Tomahawk Downtown Business Council
Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce
Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation

January 17, 2005

Business Name: _____

Business Address: _____

Business Phone: _____

Business web site and/or e-mail address: _____

Name of Business Owner: _____

Name of Person Completing the Survey (only if not the owner): _____

OVER PLEASE>>

IMPROVING YOUR BUSINESS

1. What in your opinion are some of the most positive aspects of doing business in Tomahawk?
2. What in your opinion are some barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?
3. What specific initiatives (e.g. programs, projects, events, etc.) administered by a collaboration of Tomahawk businesses could help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?
4. What are some things the local chamber can do that it is not already doing to help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?

5. What are some things local government can do that it is not already doing to help remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Tomahawk?

6. What is your level of commitment to helping plan strategies that may help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful? (please circle one number)

Not Committed		Somewhat Committed		Extremely committed
1	2	3	4	5

7. How committed might you be toward devoting a portion of your time to help implement a strategy or strategies that could help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful? (please circle one number)

Not Committed Committed		Somewhat Committed		Extremely
1	2	3	4	5

8. How committed might you be toward devoting funds to help implement a strategy or strategies that could help Tomahawk businesses in general become more successful? (please circle one number)

Not Committed Committed		Somewhat Committed		Extremely
1	2	3	4	5

9. Over the past few years, would you say that complying with Wisconsin state business regulations has become (please circle one number):

Much More Difficult		No Change		Much Easier
1	2	3	4	5

OVER PLEASE>>

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY OBSERVATIONS

10. How would you rate the following business factors in Tomahawk as they currently exist? (please circle the appropriate rating)

Factors	Not Favorable		Neutral		Highly Favorable	
Availability of Qualified Labor	1	2	3	4	5	
Availability of Supplies	1	2	3	4	5	
Availability of Credit	1	2	3	4	5	
Cooperative Efforts among Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Flexible Store Hours	1	2	3	4	5	
Prices	1	2	3	4	5	
Parking	1	2	3	4	5	
Attractiveness of Stores	1	2	3	4	5	
Popular Anchor Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Economic Development	1	2	3	4	5	
Pedestrian Access to Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Vehicle Access to Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Ability to Expand	1	2	3	4	5	
Appearance of Streets	1	2	3	4	5	
Configuration of Traffic Lights	1	2	3	4	5	
Attractiveness of Sidewalks	1	2	3	4	5	
Business Related Signage	1	2	3	4	5	
Zoning	1	2	3	4	5	
Opportunities for Advertising	1	2	3	4	5	
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5	

11. How would you rate each business factor in terms of importance with regard to fostering business creation, retention, and expansion in Tomahawk? (please circle the appropriate rating)

Factors	Not Important At All		Somewhat Important		Extremely Important	
Availability of Qualified Labor	1	2	3	4	5	
Availability of Supplies	1	2	3	4	5	
Availability of Credit	1	2	3	4	5	
Cooperative Efforts among Business	1	2	3	4	5	
Flexible Store Hours	1	2	3	4	5	
Prices	1	2	3	4	5	
Parking	1	2	3	4	5	
Attractiveness of Stores	1	2	3	4	5	
Popular Anchor Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Economic Development	1	2	3	4	5	
Pedestrian Access to Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Vehicle Access to Businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Ability to Expand	1	2	3	4	5	
Appearance of Streets	1	2	3	4	5	
Configuration of Traffic Lights	1	2	3	4	5	
Attractiveness of Sidewalks	1	2	3	4	5	
Business Related Signage	1	2	3	4	5	
Zoning	1	2	3	4	5	
Opportunities for Advertising	1	2	3	4	5	
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5	

**12. How would you rate the following community factors in Tomahawk as they currently exist?
(please circle the appropriate rating)**

Factors	Not Favorable		Neutral		Highly Favorable
Community Events	1	2	3	4	5
Attractiveness of Area	1	2	3	4	5
Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Housing	1	2	3	4	5
Public Services (non-safety)	1	2	3	4	5
Local Government	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Protection	1	2	3	4	5
Police Protection	1	2	3	4	5
Non-Business Directional Signage	1	2	3	4	5
Health care services	1	2	3	4	5
Parks/Recreation Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Snow Removal	1	2	3	4	5
Libraries	1	2	3	4	5
Chamber of Commerce	1	2	3	4	5
Child Care	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Choices	1	2	3	4	5
Entry Ways into Town	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

13. How would you rate each community factor in terms of importance with regard to fostering business creation, retention and expansion in Tomahawk? (please circle the appropriate rating)

Factors	Not Important At All		Somewhat Important		Extremely Important
Community Events	1	2	3	4	5
Attractiveness of Area	1	2	3	4	5
Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Housing	1	2	3	4	5
Public Services (non-safety)	1	2	3	4	5
Government	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Protection	1	2	3	4	5
Police Protection	1	2	3	4	5
Non-Business Directional Signage	1	2	3	4	5
Health care services	1	2	3	4	5
Parks/Recreation Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Snow Removal	1	2	3	4	5
Libraries	1	2	3	4	5
Chamber of Commerce	1	2	3	4	5
Child Care	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Choices	1	2	3	4	5
Entry Ways into Town	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

OVER PLEASE>>

14. How would you describe the overall business climate in Tomahawk? (please circle one)

Very Poor Poor Average Good Excellent

15. How would you describe the community of Tomahawk as a place to conduct business? (please circle one)

Very Poor Poor Average Good Excellent

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

16. Is this business establishment managed by the owner(s)? (please circle the appropriate answer)
YES NO

17. How long has this business existed? _____

18. Is this business owned or leased by a Lincoln County resident? **YES NO**

19. Is this a family owned business? **YES NO**

20. Is the business owned or leased? (please check only one)

Owned Leased Both
Other (please specify) _____

21. Are you considering moving, closing, or selling this business? (please check only one)

Moving Closing Selling Not Applicable

22. If you are moving, closing, or selling, please tell us why. (please write "N/A" if not applicable)

23. How many employees, including the owner if applicable, work in this establishment?

24. Is there room to build on to your facility if needed? **YES NO**

25. Are you thinking of adding space to your facility? **YES NO**

26. Do you have plans to remodel or improve your existing facility (other than expansion) within the next two years? **YES** **NO**

27. What form of legal structure is this business using? (please check only one)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietor | <input type="checkbox"/> General Partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Liability Partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C Corporation | <input type="checkbox"/> S Corporation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Liability Corporation | |

28. What product or service does this business sell?

29. Over the past three years, have your sales steadily **increased**, **decreased**, or remained about the **same**? (please circle only one)

30. Where do your customers live? (please estimate the appropriate percentages and write them in the spaces provided in front of each choice)

_____ Tomahawk _____ Outside Tomahawk but in Lincoln County _____ Outside Lincoln County

31. Please name your key competitors both in and outside of Tomahawk.

32. Please write down any additional thoughts or comments.

Thank you again for completing the survey!

Portions of this survey are based on information from the University of Wisconsin Center for Community Economic Development, the Wisconsin Main Street Program, the University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Program, the University of Wisconsin Extension Plover City Community Assessment, and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.