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## Shopping, dining are draws to downtown

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The primary reasons that people come to downtown Farmington are to shop and to dine.

According to a recently released market analysis by Strategic Edge of Southfield, the most frequently visited establishments are John Cowley & Sons, a neighborhood Irish pub on Grand River, and the CVS Pharmacy, on Farmington Road.

About 160 people were interviewed.

Cowley, who serves as chairman of the DDA's economic restructuring committee, believes Farmington has a "synergy" that will make things happen.

"The residents in this marketplace will help to get things going," Cowley said. "This is the right time to develop this marketplace and sell it to investors."

Cowley, who spent more than \$1 million to completely tear down the family business and build a new restaurant, said that his business has grown 10 percent every year for the three years since it reopened after construction.

"We need successful businessmen in this marketplace to tell their stories," said Cowley, a Farmington resident who grew up in town. "We are all in it together. We are in control."

Farmington is becoming a destination, he said.

Cowley said that the city also has to develop its residential and commercial historic district.

Farmington needs to better attract people who live in other zip codes, including Farmington Hills, he said. Cowley, who frequently visits other downtown areas, said that residents who live north of 12 Mile continue to spend their money elsewhere.

One day Cowley interviewed people at an ice cream store in downtown Plymouth.

"Do you want to know what the most prevalent zip code in Plymouth is?" he asked the crowd of 60 people at the Maxfield Training Center in Farmington. "It's Farmington Hills. Farmington Hills spends their money in Plymouth. That was an eye-opener for me."

Farmington needs to give the customers what they want, he said.

Dirk Beamer, president of the DDA, was pleased that such a variety of people came out to hear about the market analysis. "Look around this room and see who is here," Beamer said. "We have city leaders, landowners, developers from here and far, residents, patrons, friends from the Hills and the Chamber of Commerce. Folks, this is what it takes."

### THE RESULTS

The survey, commissioned by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority, took several months and cost \$20,000. The downtown trade area competes with Livonia Mall, Laurel Park Place and Twelve Oaks Mall. The trade area extends north to 11 Mile, west to Haggerty, south to Eight Mile and east to Inkster Road.

Downtown Farmington has 142 businesses and is high on personal services, but low on some retail, said Joan Primo of Strategic Edge.

The highest penetration in the trade area where 70-80 percent of business is derived comes from the Farmington zip codes of 48335 and 48336. Primo said that the trade area attracts people with a median household income of \$64,000, which Primo called "a solid, upscale-type number." The median age in the trade area is 38.4 with 77 percent of these people employed in white-collar jobs. There are more than 60 different types of lifestyles represented.

Downtown Farmington has strengths and weaknesses. Strength include "anchor" stores like John Cowley & Sons, Starbucks, T.J. Maxx and Farmington Florist.

The downtown area provides convenience for its residents. The Walter E. Sundquist pavilion on Grand River will provide a focal point for events and festivals, she said.

Parking is free downtown and patrons view it as a safe place to shop.

People continue to want a grocery store downtown.

Vacancies top the list of weaknesses. Damman's Hardware and the Bon Ton Shoppe recently closed. Street retail shops and those in the strip centers make it difficult for these merchants to "coalesce," Primo said.

Although there are numerous parking spaces in downtown Farmington, customers and merchants on the north side of Grand River don't have access to them, she said.

Heavy traffic on Grand River hinders pedestrian flow.

"Downtown Farmington has an opportunity to develop a unique identity," Primo said.

She suggested increasing entertainment and dining opportunities to attract a younger crowd.

For complete survey results, visit the DDA Web site, [www.DowntownFarmington.org/](http://www.DowntownFarmington.org/).

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