



# NEWS

FROM **WATERLOO LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## WLU Student Survey for Kitchener Chamber of Commerce

### Shows Downtown Losing Favor with Shoppers

A mailed survey of Kitchener and district persons aimed at determining their shopping preferences has shown that only 19 per cent do most of their shopping in the downtown Kitchener area.

By comparison, 29 per cent answered that they did the majority of their shopping at the suburban Fairview Mall, on the eastern outskirts of Kitchener; 14 per cent in downtown Waterloo, Kitchener's twin city; and smaller percentages at other area plazas or out of town.

The survey was conducted by Graham Mills of Brantford and Randy Hoffman of Kitchener, both students at Waterloo Lutheran University in conjunction with the Kitchener Chamber of Commerce.

The survey was conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a senior marketing course in WLU School of Business and Economics. The course is conducted by Dr. Herman O. J. Overgaard, professor of marketing.

Five thousand mailed questionnaires were sent out by the two students and the return was 29 per cent, considered unusually high for mailed surveys. The questionnaire was mailed at the end of January.

Some of the findings:

More than 40 per cent of respondents included in the survey felt that parking location and availability in downtown Kitchener were "poor to unacceptable."

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"In the vast majority of comments, parking was mentioned," the students survey said. "People felt that parking meters were an inconvenience, limited the time that a customer could spend comparing price and quality."

Many women said that attempting to park at a metered street space was "too much of a challenge" and the one parking garage was faulted since most women said the ramps were too narrow and the cost of parking too high. And while parking stamps to offset the cost of parking were supposed to be handed out by shops many respondents said stores were reluctant to do so.

At Fairview Mall, the area's largest suburban plaza, 80 per cent of respondents said parking, location and availability, temperature control, sidewalks, window displays and store decor were either good or excellent.

Shoppers in downtown Waterloo praised the lack of parking meters and free parking on Waterloo Square. Waterloo, in fact, at 35,000 persons, is the only city in the province without parking meters.

Temperature control, window displays and lighting all received good or excellent ratings in Waterloo's downtown.

Those replying to the questionnaires had complimentary things to say about the various areas, as well as some complaints.

With regard to downtown Kitchener, sales staffs were generally rated as favorable in terms of helpfulness, courtesy, appearance and product knowledge. However, 20 per cent did not agree and found that helpfulness, courtesy and product knowledge was a major problem. Next to parking, in fact, the quality of the sales persons were most often cited.

The sales personnel at Fairview Mall fared far worse than their downtown counterparts. Staff helpfulness scored only 15 per cent, courtesy a scant 10 per cent. Yet, Fairview's rating on shopping conveniences were better than any other shopping area mentioned in the survey.

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7. A city-wide product directory would be a convenience. It could rate stores and contain such information as services offered, credit facilities, parking locations and be indexed on a product classification basis.

8. There is much confusion with regard to store closing days and night closing hours. Since 77 per cent of respondents favored a Monday closing this is recommended as a general policy.