

Viewpoints

There are many places in downtown Ogden to shop and spend cash

Whenever I go to Logan I am impressed with both the beauty and prosperity of its downtown. Logan must have one of the nicest downtown districts in the country. The Bluebird Cafe, the Ibis coffee house, Sunrise Cyclery, Angie's Restaurant, Edwards Furniture and other retailers add to the charm of Logan's downtown area.

The nature of a community's retailing does a great deal to define the character of a city. Business leaders in Sandy were recently delighted to get a Cheesecake Factory restaurant because they view the arrival of the restaurant as a sign of affluence and economic prosperity, as well as good cheesecake. Residents tend to form a strong emotional connection with long-standing retailers. Folks in Chicago were outraged when Federated Department Stores changed

the name of Marshall Field's to Macy's. Many people in Salt Lake were just as sad to lose the familiar name of ZCMI.

When Ogdenites reflect upon the prime of Ogden's downtown, they are likely to remember the city's great retail businesses. The Fred M. Nye store, Buehler-Bingham's, Perkins Ltd., Tanners and others are fondly remembered. When people consider the decline of downtown Ogden, the exodus of retailers also comes to mind. Many view the closing of Nordstrom as a low point for economic fortunes of downtown Ogden.

If you analyze the difference in downtown Logan and downtown Ogden, you come to a simple and inescapable fact. The people who live in Logan spend their money in downtown Logan. The people who live in Ogden don't spend

their money in downtown Ogden. Instead, people who live in Ogden spend quite a bit of their money in South Ogden, Riverdale, Layton and Salt Lake.

Why did Ogdenites stop shopping downtown? There are a dozen different answers to this question. Some will say the old Ogden City Mall was poorly designed. Others will blame the "big-box" retailers such as Wal-Mart, Costco, Office Depot and Sam's Club, which are located in surrounding communities. Some people will say that concerns about crime and safety drove shoppers from downtown. At this point, the reason for the decline in downtown retailing is largely irrelevant. It is more important to look to the future and consider what needs to be done to stimulate retailing in Ogden. At the most basic level, the answer is pretty simple. People who live in Ogden need to spend more of their retail dollars in Ogden.

A likely response to this suggestion is that there aren't enough retailers in downtown Ogden to justify shopping there. After all, you can't buy an Apple computer, a pair of Nike running shoes, a cup of Starbucks coffee or an Abercrombie sweatshirt in

downtown Ogden.

While the retail scene in downtown Ogden isn't as vibrant as it once was, there are still retail businesses in downtown Ogden. In fact, there are more retailers now than just a few years ago. With a little effort, Ogdenites could spend at least a few more of their shopping dollars downtown.

Washington Boulevard is still home to a number of locally owned retailers. Farr's Jewelry has been doing business in Ogden for over 50 years. Clifton's women's clothing store is another long-standing Ogden retailer. Both these businesses have been through economic booms and busts in downtown Ogden. There are also some more recent additions on Washington Boulevard selling an eclectic mix of products. The Bookshelf carries new books, a wide selection of used books, comics books, videos and other stuff you didn't know existed but might decide you need once you see it. You will find shops with interesting names, including: the Capricorn's Lair, HeeBeeGeeBees, and Grains, Grapes and Grounds. These shops sell an interesting collection of goods that you will never find at Wal-Mart or Target.

Retailers on 25th Street continue to grow. The 25th Street renaissance, which began with a few shops and restaurants, now stretches from the Municipal Gardens to Union Station. Retailers on 25th Street range from gift shops to women's clothing boutiques to antique shops.

More retailers are moving into the downtown area. In a few weeks, Bingham Cyclery plans to open a new store located where Park Boulevard intersects Washington Boulevard.

The location, which is just steps away from the Ogden River Parkway, is a natural location for a bike shop.

Anyone living in Ogden should be able to find at least a few downtown retailers they can patronize. The city will be a better place if Ogdenites make the effort.

There is a Texas legend that a prominent Fort Worth businessman always packed a sack lunch when he went to Dallas because he couldn't stand to spend a dime of his money in the rival city. If the citizens of Ogden could adopt a little bit of that spirit, it would give the city a needed boost.

Top of Utah Voices



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Commentary

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