The Retail Landscape in Cooperstown and Hartwick:

2014 Update

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Introduction

Beginning in 1997, data on the composition of retail in the Greater Cooperstown Area was collected on a biennial basis. The initial round of data collection included urbanized settings in the municipalities that compose the Cooperstown School District, but this was later expanded to include the Town of Springfield so as to surround Otsego Lake. The longitudinal data is thus not comprehensive for the region as a whole, but it does demonstrate trends in retail composition and location within the core of the Cooperstown market.

The longitudinal data has, in the past, been utilized to understand wider issues in the regional and statewide economies (Thomas 2003; Thomas & Smith 2008). In addition, past work has found that the area's two largest retail areas are centered in the Village of Cooperstown and in the eastern portion of the Town of Hartwick. Retail activity has grown in both locales since 1997, although the number of retail establishments has grown faster in Hartwick than Cooperstown (Thomas et al. 2003; Thomas et al. 2008). Although the dominant sector of the local economy is medical care, much of the region's identity and outward retail is oriented toward tourism. This report examines the composition of retail activity in these two locales since 1997.

Recent Demographic Trends

Table 1 shows demographic changes in the area since 1990. The general trend has been one of relative stability, the population growing 2.4 percent during the 1990s and declining about the same amount during the 2000s. This data conceal a redistribution of the population during that same time period as the Village of Cooperstown dropped from 2,278 in 1990 to 1,852 in 2010 even as the population of the Town of Otsego remained stable. Population trends are not reflective of the growth in housing units, however, as shown in table 2.

Table 1: Population in the Study Area, by Town, 1990-2010

Town	1990	2000	Change 1990-2000 (%)	2010	Change 2000-2010 (%)
Hartwick	2,045	2,203	158 (7.7)	2,110	-93 (-4.2)
Middlefield	2,231	2,249	18 (0.8)	2,114	-135 (-6.0)
Otsego*	3,932	3,904	-28 (-0.7)	3,900	-4 (-0.1)
Springfield	1,267	1,345	78 (6.2)	1,358	13 (0.1)
TOTAL	9,475	9,701	226 (2.4)	9,482	-219 (-2.3)

*Includes Village of Cooperstown

Source: USBC 2000; 2014

Despite a falling population, the area gained almost 600 housing units between 2000 and 2010, the greatest growth concentrated in the townships surrounding Otsego Lake. About 45 percent of the new housing units (262) were seasonal in nature, and the proportion of the area's housing stock that is seasonal has increased to 18.2 percent in2010. Statewide, only 3.6 percent of housing units are seasonal, and the high proportion of such housing locally is testimony to the tourism economy.

Table 2: Population and Housing in the Study Area, by Town, 2000-2010

Town	2000-2010 Growth (%)	Housing Units 2000	Housing Units 2010	Growth (%)	Seasonal 2000 (%)	Seasonal 2010 (%)
Hartwick	-93 (-4.2)	1,098	1,162	64 (5.8)	125 (11.4)	183 (15.7)
Middlefield	-135 (-6.0)	1,058	1,277	219 (20.7)	201 (19.0)	248 (20.2)
Otsego*	-4 (-0.1)	2,193	2,377	184 (8.4)	307 (28.0)	434 (18.3)
Springfield	13 (0.1)	712	827	115 (16.2)	132 (18.5)	162 (19.6)
TOTAL	-219 (-2.3)0	5,061	5,643	582 (11.4)	765 (15.1)	1,027 (18.2)

*Includes Village of Cooperstown

Source: USBC 2000; 2014

Population decline is explained in part by locally high concentrations of retirees, particularly in the townships surrounding Otsego Lake. In Cooperstown, 23.6 percent of the village's residents were over the age of 65 in 2010, and in the remainder of the Town of Otsego 25.1 percent of residents were over 65. In Middlefield and Springfield this proportion is somewhat less at 18.6 and 19.9 percent, respectively. In contrast, only the Town of Hartwick is below the statewide average of 13.5 percent of residents age 65 and over. Fueled in part by a high proportion of young families, only 9.7 percent of Hartwick's population is 65 or older.

Given recent population and tourism trends, it is not surprising that the Town of Hartwick has experienced moderate economic growth. A 2007 study estimated that the regional population grows by about 68 percent during the summertime, the highest concentration in the Town of Hartwick (Thomas et al. 2008). As the area population increasingly lives outside the Village of Cooperstown, the rise of an automobile-friendly suburban-style strip outside the Village is not surprising. In addition, the location of substantial tourism resources in the town has also fueled the growth in the area. However, the growth appears to have had little impact on vacancy rates in downtown Cooperstown. Instead, downtown has become more specialized toward a tourism economy.

Method

For the purposes of this study, downtown Cooperstown was defined as the commercial area of Main Street extending from near the Otsego County Office Complex to the corner with Fair Street. Small areas of commercial activity extending approximately half a block from each side of Main Street along Chestnut and Pioneer Streets, Hoffman and Stagecoach Lanes, and the Doubleday Field area were also included. A list of addresses in the downtown area was assembled. For each year at two- year intervals beginning in 1997 the businesses located at each address were recorded. Data was collected with the help of lists supplied by the Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce and permit applications supplied by the Village of Cooperstown. Earlier iterations of this data, with in some cases data reaching back to 1979, have been published previously (Thomas et al. 2003; Thomas et al. 2011). Data were similarly collected for the Hartwick Seminary area. This area is defined as the Route 28 corridor, including adjacent side roads with commercial traffic, from the town line south to Goey Pond Road. Each business recorded was then coded according to the scheme outlined below.

Businesses classified as “general” sell goods that are of use to the general population on a regular basis. This definition is inclusive of grocery, pharmaceutical supply, and other such general merchandise. Such businesses often sell items related to tourism, but the primary purpose of such stores is the sale of general merchandise.

General stores that supply automotive fuel are designated “General-Fuel” (Thomas 2003:163-4).

Specialty stores sell goods that are intended for aesthetic or symbolic use, such as unique items or souvenirs. Boutiques that sell clothes in addition to a number of other specialty items were classified as specialty stores, although a store selling only clothes is classified “general.” Businesses that do not have as a primary orientation baseball related merchandise were classified “specialty, non-baseball.” A “Specialty, baseball” designation is applied to those stores that do have a primary orientation toward baseball related items (Thomas 2003: 164).

Food Service establishments include businesses whose primary purpose is the preparation and service of food for consumption (Thomas 2003: 164).

Local (and General) Services include businesses whose primary purpose is to provide a specific service, such as financial services, real estate, or minor production services such as printing, photocopying, or customer service.

A sixth category – art galleries – was also coded.

Bars and taverns were coded separately from food service establishments. In addition, adult oriented retail outlets, such as “head shops,” were also separately coded. Similarly, amusements, such as pool halls and movie theaters, were given separate codes.

Civic institutions, such as the Post Office, city offices, and the offices of non- profit community groups (such as Opportunities for Otsego) were classified as “civic.” Private clubs, such as the Elks Club, were classified as Private Clubs.

Car dealers and automobiles service shops were classified under “Car/Implement Dealer.” Manufacturing and milling was classified under “Industrial,” whereas warehousing was classified separately.

Findings

It is helpful to compare the composition of downtown Cooperstown’s retail landscape to that of competing tourist towns. Table 3 shows the composition of downtown retail in Lake George, Lake Placid, Old Forge, Rhinebeck, and Woodstock. The relatively low proportion of general retail in Cooperstown was mirrored in these other communities. As these communities rely upon a certain amount of tourism to maintain the economies of scale necessary to have a healthy downtown, the reliance on specialty stores is roughly the same across all of the communities. Cooperstown has the highest proportion of specialty-niche stores—in Cooperstown the niche is baseball—but the overall proportion of 39 percent specialty is in line with that found in the other communities. About 20 percent of downtown Cooperstown is food-oriented, approximately in line with other tourist towns although perhaps leaving room for expansion. The vacancy rate, the rate of storefronts not occupied at the time of the survey, of 7 percent in 2013 is not substantially different from that found in other communities given the small number of storefronts in each community.

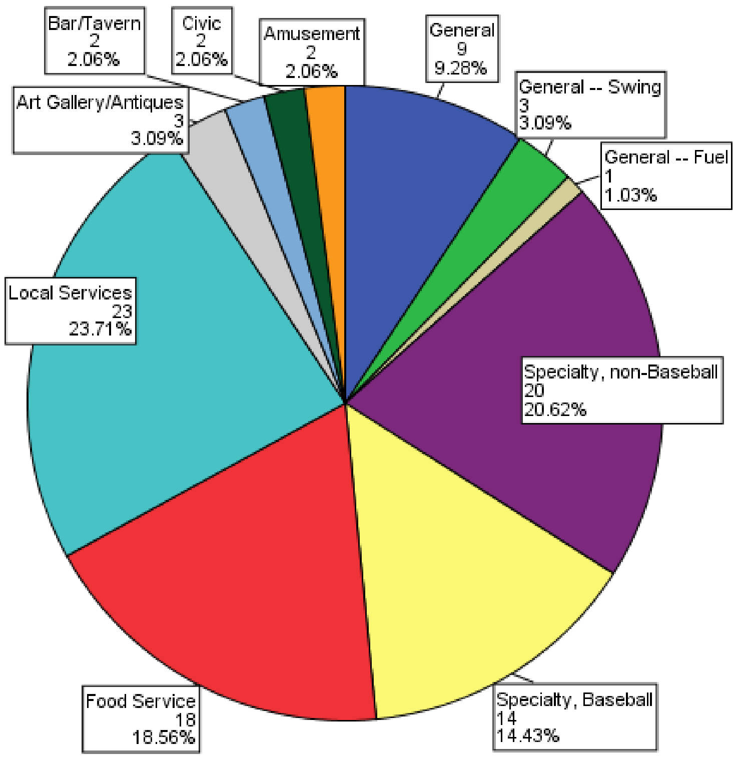
Table 3: Number of Businesses by Type in Six Tourist Towns, by Year of Data Collection

Type	Number of Businesses (%)					
	Lake George (2011)	Lake Placid (2011)	Old Forge (2011)	Rhinebeck (2011)	Woodstock (2010)	Cooperstown[1] (2013)
General	6 (4.6)	9 (8.9)	6 (15.4)	11 (10.2)	15 (15.8)	5 (5.0)
Specialty, non-Niche	37 (28.5)	31 (30.7)	15 (38.5)	35 (32.7)	33 (34.7)	18 (18.0)
Specialty, Niche	8 (6.2)	7 (6.9)	0	0	6 (6.3)	21 (21.0)
Food Service	43 (33.1)	26 (25.7)	8 (20.5)	20 (18.7)	9 (9.5)	20 (20.0)
Local Services	0	8 (7.9)	3 (7.7)	27 (25.2)	6 (6.3)	17 (17.0)
Bar/Tavern	4 (3.1)	4 (4.0)	1 (2.6)	0	0	3 (3.0)
Adult	2 (1.5)	0	0	0	0	0
Civic	7 (5.4)	6 (5.9)	1 (2.6)	6 (5.6)	2 (2.1)	2 (2.0)
Amusement	11 (8.5)	1 (1.0)	1 (2.6)	2 (1.9)	0	2 (2.0)
Vacant	5 (3.8)	6 (5.9)	1 (2.6)	1 (0.9)	8 (8.4)	7 (7.0)
TOTAL	130	101	39	107	95	100

[1] Data for Cooperstown in this table includes vacant storefronts, but does not in the charts that follow
[2] Niches: Lake George-Beachwear; Lake Placid-Outdoor Equipment & Apparel; Woodstock-Eastern Philosophy; Cooperstown-Baseball

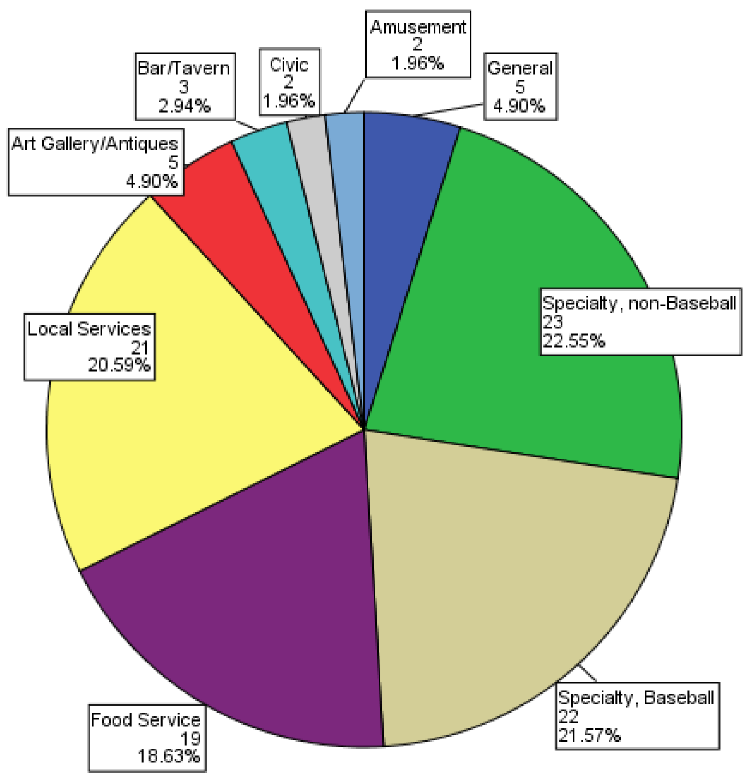
The remaining charts examine downtown Cooperstown and the route 28 corridor in the Town of Hartwick since 1997.

Figure 1: Distribution of Retail Types in Downtown Cooperstown, 1997



Despite popular assumptions, 81.3 percent of businesses in 1997 did not have a baseball reference in the business name, belying the claim that downtown Cooperstown is "all baseball." In 1997, there were 14 specialty-baseball retail businesses composing 14.4 percent of the businesses in downtown Cooperstown. These were overshadowed by specialty non-baseball stores that consisted of 20 businesses (20.6 percent). Food and beverage services also composed a large portion of downtown businesses. In 1997, there were 18 food service businesses comprising 18.6 percent of the total business in downtown Cooperstown, and an additional 2 bar/tavern businesses. Local services accounted for the largest proportion of businesses, with 23 businesses, or 23.7 percent of the total. General business, general-swing business, and general-fuel businesses accounted for 13.4 percent of downtown businesses. Of the total number of storefronts in 1997, 67 (72 percent) had been in the downtown area two years earlier. Similarly, 76 (81.7 percent) storefronts had the same type of business two years earlier regardless of whether the business had changed ownership.

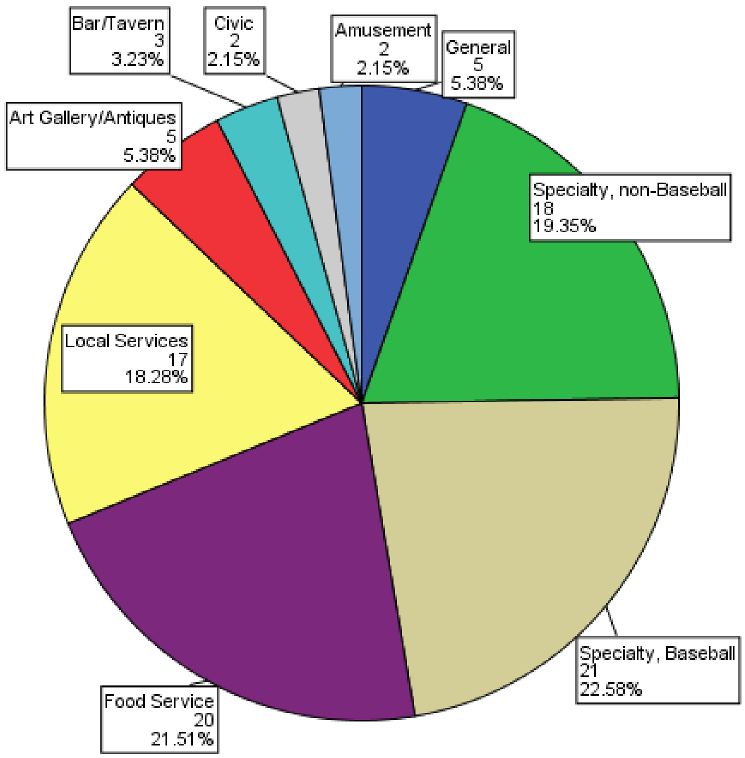
Figure 2: Distribution of Retail Types in Downtown Cooperstown, 2005



Downtown Cooperstown added 5 businesses in storefronts between 1997 and 2005. In 2005, 4.9 percent of downtown storefronts were classified arts/antiques. Local services, the largest sector in 1997, lost two businesses, composing 20.6 percent of the downtown businesses. Food service establishments remained consistent with the data collected in 1995 with an addition of 1 business, the 19 establishments composing 18.6 percent of the total. The most notable change between 1997 and 2005 was in the specialty retail sector. Both specialty-baseball businesses and specialty non-baseball businesses witnessed an increase in proportion and number of businesses added. Specialty-baseball businesses grew the most by adding 8 businesses: the 22 stores accounted for 21.6 percent downtown establishments. Specialty non-baseball added 3 businesses, and the sector represented the largest proportion of businesses: 23 businesses accounted for 22.6 percent of the total. General businesses including general swing and general fuel businesses declined in proportion and number of businesses.

Businesses were more consistent from the previous survey than in the 1997 data: 80.4 percent of the total businesses did not change business types. This is an 8% increase in business consistency when compared to the 1995 to 1997 data. There was, however, an increase in baseball references in businesses names: 28 percent of downtown businesses referenced baseball in the business name in 2005.

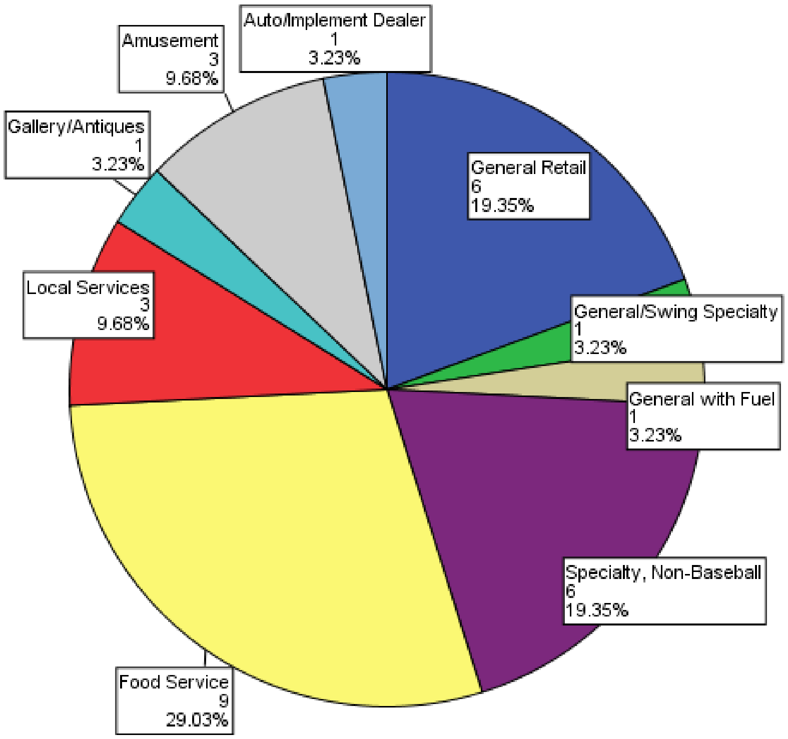
Figure 3: Distribution of Retail Types in Downtown Cooperstown, 2013



Most recently, of the 93 total businesses in 2013, the 17 local services businesses accounted for 18.3 percent of downtown businesses, and the 18 specialty non-baseball stores accounted for 19.4 percent of downtown storefronts. Local services had continued the decline evident since 1997. The 21 specialty-baseball shops were roughly stable, representing 22.6 percent of downtown storefronts. Food services continued the expansion evident over the entire period. As of 2013, there were 20 food service businesses accounting for 21.5 percent of the downtown Cooperstown business; the second highest proportion of business behind specialty-baseball businesses.

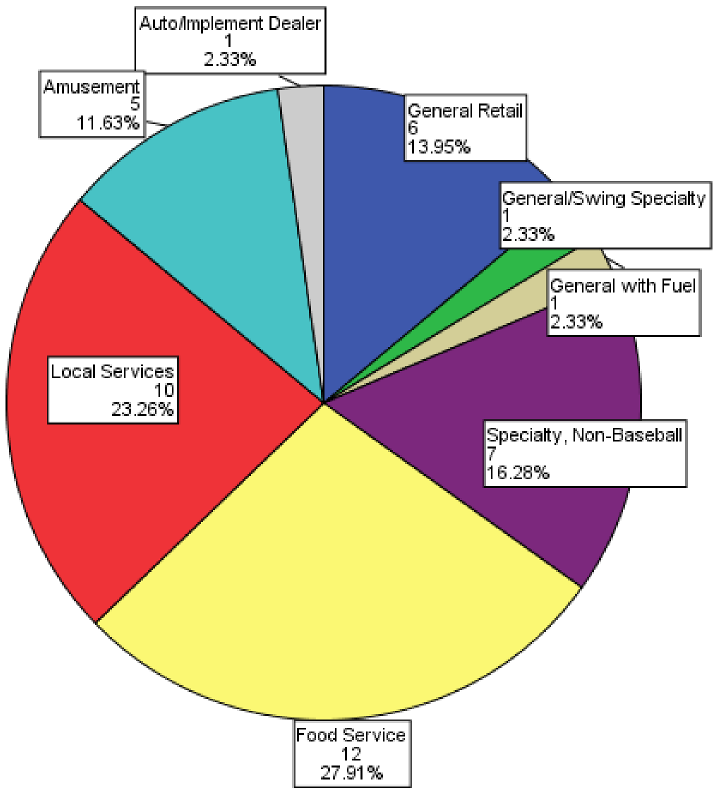
From 2011 to 2013, 30.5 percent of the storefronts from 2011 to 2013 experienced a business change. Of those changes, nearly 80 percent did not change business types. The increasing dominance of specialty-baseball and food service establishments, as well as specialty non-baseball stores, reflected an increasing reliance on tourism; not surprisingly, 29.7 percent of businesses referenced baseball in the business name—a 9 percentage point change since 1997. Nevertheless, the claim that downtown Cooperstown is "all baseball" is not warranted.

Figure 4: Distribution of Retail Types in Hartwick Seminary, 1997



Home to the Cooperstown Dreams Park baseball camp, Hartwick Seminary lies just outside of Cooperstown in the Town of Hartwick. Away from the Cooperstown downtown, Hartwick Seminary has a different delineation of business numbers, proportions, and types. The largest businesses sector for Hartwick Seminary in 1997 was Food Services. The nine food services establishments composed 29 percent of businesses in Hartwick Seminary; there were three more businesses in the Food Service sector than in the next highest sectors, specialty non-baseball and general retail businesses. Specialty non-baseball businesses and general retail businesses each account for 19.35 percent of the total businesses with 6 businesses. Local services and amusement businesses each had 3 businesses and accounted for 9.7 percent of the businesses. In 1997 90.3 percent of Hartwick Seminary businesses did not use a baseball reference in the business name, although 9.7 percent of businesses did utilize a baseball reference in the business name.

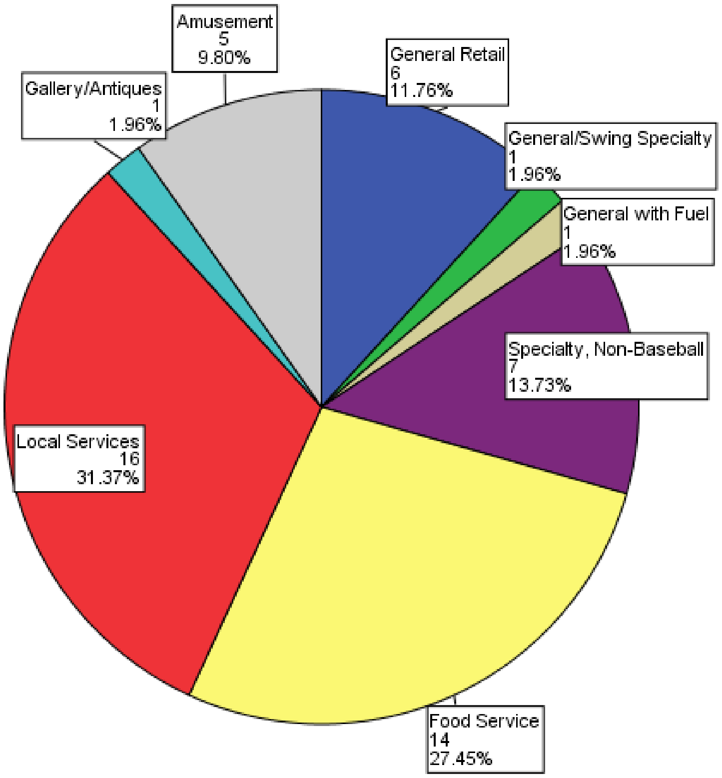
Figure 5: Distribution of Retail Types in Hartwick Seminary, 2005



In 2005, Hartwick Seminary had not only witnessed growth of 12 businesses, but also did not experience a decline in business in any coded sectors. Food services continued to represent the largest proportion of Hartwick Seminary businesses, accounting for 27.9 percent of the businesses with 12 businesses. Local services experienced the largest growth from 1997 to 2005, representing the second largest proportion of businesses in Hartwick Seminary. In 2005 there were 10 local service businesses, an addition of seven since 1997 and representing a 23.3 percent increase in the total number of businesses. Specialty non-baseball, the second largest contributor to business in Hartwick Seminary in 1997, experienced a growth of one business by 2005, representing 16.3 percent of businesses. The amusement sector grew by 2 businesses from 1997: amusement had 5 businesses, accounting for 11.6 percent of the businesses in Hartwick Seminary in 2005. Remaining constant from the 1997 data, auto/implement dealers, general fuel, general retail, and general swing experienced no change in the number of businesses, with 1 each representing 2.3 percent of the total business each. General retail remained constant with 6 businesses, accounting for 14 percent of the total businesses. Proportionally, general retail experienced a decline due to the business growth in other sectors.

Between 2001 and 2005, 48 percent of storefronts in Hartwick Seminary experienced a business change in the previous 4 years. Among those, 32.6 percent of these businesses changed business type and 67.4 percent of the businesses remained in the same type of business. With roughly a 4 percent increase of baseball references in business names, 14 percent of Hartwick Seminary businesses referenced baseball in the business name in 2005 while 86 percent of businesses did not.

Figure 6: Distribution of Retail Types in Hartwick Seminary, 2013



As of 2013, Hartwick Seminary had experienced an 8 business increase since 2005 and a 20 business increase since 1997. Of this net growth, there was a loss in only one business sector, auto/implement dealerships. As of 2013, the auto/implement dealership had been lost as a Hartwick Seminary business. Local services and food services have experienced a constant growth since 1997. Local services claimed the largest proportion of business in 2013, contributing 16 businesses to account for 31.4 percent of the total businesses. Food services has climbed to represent the second highest contribution to Hartwick Seminary, with 14 businesses totaling 27.5 percent of the total businesses. All other categories experienced no change since 2005.

From 2009 to 2013, 80 percent of businesses in Hartwick Seminary remained constant and 20 percent had changed. Of that 20 percent, only 19.2 percent of those businesses changed types while 80.8 percent remained within the same sector as the former business. Despite Hartwick Seminary's proximity to the Cooperstown Dreams Park, there had been over a 6 percentage point drop in businesses using a baseball reference in the business name. Consistent with the growth in local services, 92.2 percent of businesses in Hartwick Seminary in 2013 did not use a baseball reference in the business name.

Conclusions

In previous work (Thomas 2003; Thomas et al. 2003) we had concluded that the restructuring of the area retail landscape was the result of macro level forces, particularly the ability of local residents to drive to neighboring communities for goods and services. Local residents are still quite likely to shop locally for basic goods and services, but for more specialized goods such as clothing and electronics residents have become increasingly likely to drive to the Oneonta and Utica areas (Thomas et al. 2002). This overall trend is evident in the current round of data as well.

Although the number of occupied storefronts has increased in both downtown Cooperstown and Hartwick Seminary since 1997, there is not a corresponding increase in General type businesses oriented toward the local community. The long-term trend likely indicates that the local economy has reached equilibrium in general retail stores. Growth in local services has mirrored national trends throughout the time period, and not surprisingly the data presented here reflect that growth. Much of the growth locally has been in tourism-oriented (or at least heavily influenced) businesses: specialty retail and food services. The overall pattern has been for increased specialization in specialty-retail—baseball related or not—in downtown Cooperstown and for Hartwick Seminary to provide tourism support services such as accommodations and food services. The continued growth and pricing of restaurants and accommodations could be an indication that equilibrium has not yet been met in these sectors.

Overall, the Cooperstown area has witnessed significant changes in the operation of its retail economy since the 1980s, but these changes mirror national trends and are similar to those found in other rural tourism regions.

Further Reading[1]

There are additional resources that area residents might find helpful. Three books have examined the development of tourism in the Cooperstown area. *A Legend for the Legendary* (Vlasich, 1990) examines the origins and growth of the Baseball Hall of Fame. An analysis of the cultural impact of baseball tourism in Cooperstown and Dyersville, Iowa is found in *From Cooperstown to Dyersville* (Springwood, 1996). More recently, the causes and impact of tourism and more general changes in the area economy is discussed in *In Gotham's Shadow* (Thomas, 2003). Fitchen's (1991) *Endangered Spaces*, *Enduring Places* examines changes in the way rural upstate New Yorkers experience community, and Thomas' (1999) article *Untowning Hartwick* does the same more locally.

More broadly, there are certain books that would be of interest for one seeking to understand more about the nature of recent changes in rural communities around the country. The root causes of economic changes are presented in the edited reader, *Forgotten Places* (Lyson & Falk, 1993). Another reader, *Changing Rural Social Systems* (Johnson & Wang, 1997), discusses such changes with an eye toward how communities from are adapting to new challenges. Young's (1999) *Small Towns in Multilevel Reality* examines the impact of recent demographic

[1] Adapted from Thomas et al, 2003.

changes on the sense of community found in small towns generally. Two good books that examine the role of the museum in tourism and the economy are Handler & Gable (1997) *The New History in an Old Museum* and Kirshenblatt-Gimlet's (1998) *Destination Culture*. There are numerous studies of retail shopping patterns that are worth reading, including Pinkerton et al (1995) *Inshopping by Residents of Small Communities*, Brown et al (1996) *Outshopping and the Viability of Rural Communities as Service/Trade Centers*, and Miller & Kean (1997) *Factors Contributing to Inshopping Behavior in Rural Trade Area: Implications for Local Retailers*. A similar but more limited survey about where residents of Hartwick shop was conducted in 2001 (Thomas et al, 2002).

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