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[shop] Where Are Wichita's Shopping Districts?

22 December 2009 by [Steph Barnard](#) 9 Comments



A recent episode of National Public Radio's [Planet Money](#) explored the concept of multiple stores selling the same product or service being located in the same place. In New York, where the show is produced, there's a floral district, a jewelry district, even a chess district. (Really, there are chess stores. Who knew?)

It works because customers have heightened awareness of a product or service being available, and the stores complement each other. If you're seeking a certain rare flower or need an awesome arrangement made, you know you can get it in the floral district. Vendors might have to charge less than they could if they moved to a different neighborhood, but they still get more business.

Of course, this concept doesn't work for every industry; you wouldn't want all the coffee shops or dry cleaners in town to be on the same block, for example. But I'd like to see this concept be more present in Wichita. It would take a few years and a lot of investment in relocation, but here's an idea of what it would look like:

Apparel District

Stores: Aspen Boutique, Pink Saloon, K-Lane's, Name Brand Clothing, Klassic Line, Bricks, Tonia's Shoe Corner, etc.

Why: The incentive of shopping for clothes at department stores is the ability to find everything in one place. In theory, these stores compete with one another, but I'm not about to drive from one end of the city to the other in search of that perfect skirt before giving up and settling for Target or the mall. If the stores were all together, I'd be much more likely to peruse them all – and keep my dollars spent locally.

Where: Douglas and Oliver (where Aspen and Pink Saloon are already peacefully co-existing) or the Waterfront

Craft District

Who: Twist Yarn Shop, Heritage Hut, sewing machine service centers, Scrapbook Garden, Hen Feathers Quilt Shop, etc.

Why: Crafters have time and disposable income to spare, but those that dabble in multiple crafts have to search all over town for supplies or brave the mediocrity of Hobby Lobby. This is a goldmine waiting to happen.

Where: Delano (current home of Twist) or the northeast or northwest sides (current home to many housewives)

Garden/Floral District

Who: Beard's Floral, Angela's Floral & Gifts, Flower Factory, Garden Reflections, Tree Top Nursery, etc.

Why: Like the NYC equivalent, clumping these stores together will increase customers' awareness of their existence and make them less likely to use a big-box equivalent, like Dillons Floral or Lowe's.

Where: Clifton Square (Angela's and Garden Reflections are already there) or 37th and Woodlawn (because it might be hard to move a nursery)

Gourmet District

Who: Cocoa Dolce, Spice Merchant, Chelmsford Tea, Monica's Bundt Cake Co., Nifty Nut House

Why: So foodies can get their fix of every delicacy without having to drive between stores, which makes them hungrier and more likely to give up, go home and eat all the delicious stuff smelling up their cars.

Where: East of downtown along Douglas, where several of these shops are already located; they just need to be a little closer together. (Proximity to The Donut Whole and Get Franked doesn't hurt, either!)

Which other shops would you like to see synergize in Wichita? Be an armchair urban planner in the comments.

Photo courtesy of [Eric Wittman](#)

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Missy said:

You got me at the Gourmet District. I would so be there. Way to offen for my wallet to be happy with me.

22 December 2009 at 8:46 am



Melissa said:

Okay, please add a kitchen supply store to the foodie district.

In the craft district, I'd LOVE for a place that rents table space. Saw a store in Colorado about 10 years ago that was half store, half workspace. It was 4,000 sq ft of tables and chairs for paper crafters, sofas and comfy armless chairs for yarnies and there were even ladies with their sewing machines there quilting. It was super nice to mix and mingle with other crafters.

22 December 2009 at 9:52 am



Jamie said:

Mel, I like your ideas.

We've kinda sorta got that going on at First Gear/Heartland Cyclery, and at Continental Cyclery/D & J Sports. True, I'm a tri nerd, but it's nice to be able to hit swim/bike and bike/run at the same time. Now if we could just get swim, bike, and run in a nice, pretty row . . .

22 December 2009 at 4:57 pm



Amy D said:

Steph, this is a brilliant post. A small, very walkable town I used to live in had this in the center city. I remember having to shop for new glasses and all the different stores were on the same block.

I think the "Douglas Design District" that the businesses on Douglas from Washington to I-135 are working on is along these lines, but I don't know of any other areas in the city like that.

Good ideas. I hope the owners of the stores you mention are reading Verb....

22 December 2009 at 6:40 pm



kelsey said:

Of course I am biased-I think all things cool should end of in the Delano :) We shop owners always talk about Mass Street in Lawrence and how West Douglas has the infrastructure for exactly this purpose. You need synergy not only to draw people in

but to get them to stay and hang out, i.e., spend money-it's what's going to keep mom and pops open-Great article, maybe it'll make prospective business owners think more when locating/relocating.

23 December 2009 at 11:28 am



andrea said:

Love it! It would be great for local businesses and consumers alike!

23 December 2009 at 11:39 am



Dustin said:

Oh, man. If there was a true gourmet district... well, I'd be in heaven. And then, shortly after, a diabetic coma. And I was thinking what Amy said – the Douglas Design district is the closest thing we have to this, and although it's great, it's got a long way to go before realizing the potential that something like this plan has.

Very nice.

23 December 2009 at 11:45 am



Steph Barnard (author) said:

The thing about the Douglas Design District is that I've never had a reason to go into any of those stores. What are they, exactly?

I do see Delano's potential to achieve what Mass St. has. It needs a bigger variety of businesses, and they need to be open a bit later in the evening, both of which are tall orders in this economy, unfortunately.

17 January 2010 at 3:51 pm



Heather said:

What a neat idea. I would love to see this come to fruition. There are so many times I want to shop at more than one local store but just don't have the time to drive around to all of them. I'm drooling just thinking of a gourmet district.

18 January 2010 at 4:40 pm

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