

Inside Track: Clicks add up to more bodies

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Each fall for the past 15 years, a dozen temporary workers hired by Bruce descend upon the sidewalks and skyways of downtown with tiny clickers in hand in an attempt to count pedestrian traffic for local businesses.

Though Bruce isn't quite done tallying up all the clicks, the preliminary results for several key downtown spots look promising. An average of 24,546 people passed by 8th and 9th Streets on Nicollet Mall last September, up 43 percent from the previous year. Traffic through Northstar West was up 41 percent, and the street-level entrance to the U.S. Bank Plaza saw a 28 percent gain.

Bruce, owner of Pedestrian Studies in Minneapolis, acknowledged this is not perfect science. A warm, sunny day can throw off the numbers on outdoor counts by up to 10 percent. He said he was careful to pick days in which there were no special events downtown or big sales at downtown department stores.

He attributes the increase in downtown pedestrian traffic to a rebounding office market and more retail and restaurant options on Nicollet Mall. "Overall, pedestrian traffic downtown is holding strong. A lot of cities can't say that," Bruce said.