

Traffic study expands

By Susan Feyder

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For more than 15 years the foot-traffic studies done by Minneapolis-based Pedestrian Studies have focused on skyways and sidewalks around Nicollet Mall. Prompted by the growing number of businesses west of Nicollet, the firm this fall also will begin measuring sidewalk traffic on Hennepin and First Avenues, according to Pedestrian Studies founder Peter Bruce.

Bruce collects the data for his annual studies by hiring temporary workers, who fan out on skyways and sidewalks in front of buildings whose managers pay to participate in the research. The workers use handheld clickers to get hourly tallies of people walking by. Building owners and managers use Bruce's research to market their properties and negotiate lease terms with tenants. Retailers also use the data to scout locations.

Bruce said he's been getting more inquiries from retail real estate experts interested in how foot traffic has been changing closer to the Warehouse District.

"In most of this district, there are no baseline volumes to even start from," Bruce said. "I did some work when Block E first opened five years ago. Now we have light rail bringing people to Hennepin and First Avenues, the new ballpark causing people to think about the opportunities there, and new transit connections planned to bring more people on an everyday basis."

Bruce said that he hopes to collect enough data on the west side of downtown to make a good estimate of storefronts' visibility to foot traffic, as well as actual traffic passing them.

"The most fascinating question, of course, is how businesses can capture more by doing modest visual and physical improvements," he said.

Bruce expects to have some data by November.

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