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San Antonio is primed for retail success, study says

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Tricia Lynn Silva](#)

While the local retail market is not one to be summed up as fast and furious these days, there's no need to hold up in a panic room either.

A new study by **Pitney Bowes Business Insight** (PBBI) has identified the Alamo City as one of five markets well-positioned for retail sales recovery and/or growth come 2010.

Troy, New York-based PBBI announced those markets primed for success during the 2009 Global Real Estate Convention (RECon) in Las Vegas — an annual, international retail conference presented by New York-based industry organization the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC).

PBBI's list of five cities also includes three others in Texas: Austin, Dallas and Houston. The lone out-of-Texas city: Seattle, Wash.

PBBI looked at various market factors — including the comparative retail sales history of a city from first quarter 2008 to second quarter 2009, and a market's ability to remain stable over that time period. The study culled data from several retail categories — such as drug stores; and high-end, mid-tier and value retailers.

So what makes San Antonio a top market? Per the PBBI report, the city's "relatively stable economic environment," was certainly a factor. The city has also been well-sustained by "growth in personal expenditures and consistent growth in gross metro product." Prime categories for the local retail market: Drug stores and value-priced retailers, PBBI adds.

Boomers needed

One segment that could help move things along in the retail industry: Baby Boomers.

In a new book called "Boomer Selling," author Steve Howard states that this demographic is key to the country's economic rebound — so much so that they should be re-branded as Economic Boomers.

This age group controls more than half of the discretionary spending in the country, and they hold more than 70 percent of the country's wealth, Howard writes.

"When the American economy recovers, it will be on the backs of Baby Boomers," Howard adds. "Consumer spending is the backbone of our economy, and Boomers are still spending ... They are conspicuous consumers, but they are also smart consumers, and their buying patterns help the cream of American business rise to the top."

Now open

Perhaps local boomers can do some spending at a one of San Antonio's newest eateries: Five Guys Burgers and Fries. The store is located in North Central Side shopping center Quarry Village.

Headquartered in Lorton, Va., Five Guys was founded by Janie and Jerry Murrell and their five sons — the Five Guys. They opened their first store in Arlington in 1986. Today, the chain boasts more than 300 locations in some 25 states. The concept has been included as a ZAGAT rated concept, consecutively, for the past seven years. Five Guys has also received high praise from the likes of GQ Magazine and **The Miami Herald**.

And the Quarry store may be just the beginning. Plans call for a total of 15 new locations in the Central Texas market. In addition to the Quarry restaurant, Five Guys also has one store up and running in Austin, and another on the way — only a dozen more to go!

On the Web: www.fiveguys.com

Alternative workspace

A San Antonio firm is offering area businesses a ready-made work environment.

Known as C4 Workspace, this workplace site is located at 108 King William, in the King William District just north of downtown San Antonio.

With an emphasis on sole proprietors and small businesses, C4 offers a shared office environment — complete with high-speed Internet, conference and phone rooms and a break area and lounge. Memberships are available on a full-, part-time and daily basis.

Todd O'Neil, partner/resident of C4 Workspace — as his title states — explains the concept: "People can start with a daily desk and as they

grow, move on to a part-time desk. As their enterprise grows, they move into a full-time desk ... we will look to grow to accommodate them.”

For more info, including rental rates, log on at: www.c4workspace.com.

Toy giants

Wayne, N.J.-based toy behemoth **Toys “R” Us Inc.** has acquired another giant of the industry: **FAO Schwarz**.

Toys “R” Us will continue to operate the two FAO Schwarz stores — the flagship store in New York City and the store in the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas — under that iconic name. E-commerce and catalog operations also will remain under the FAO Schwarz brand.

“We have enormous respect for the FAO Schwarz brand and for the special place it holds in the hearts of children everywhere,” says Jerry Storch, chairman and CEO of Toys “R” Us. “We will work tirelessly to preserve the distinctiveness and integrity of the FAO Schwarz stores”

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