



The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities

CALCULATING THE VALUE OF MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
A 2023 IDA STUDY

A 2023 PUBLICATION CREATED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION



**INSPIRED LEADERS
SHAPING CITIES**

ABOUT IDA



IDA

The International Downtown Association is the premier association of urban place managers who are shaping and activating dynamic downtown districts. Founded in 1954, IDA represents an industry of more than 2,500 place management organizations that employ 100,000 people throughout North America. Through its network of diverse practitioners, its rich body of knowledge, and its unique capacity to nurture community-building partnerships, IDA provides tools, intelligence and strategies for creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well-being of towns, cities and regions of the world. IDA members are downtown champions who bring urban centers to life. For more information on IDA, visit downtown.org.

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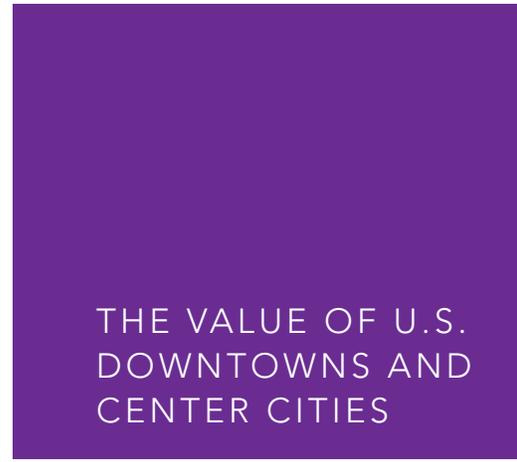
The IDA Research Committee is composed of industry experts who help IDA align strategic goals and top issues to produce high-quality research products informing both IDA members and the place management industry. Chaired and led by IDA Board members, the Research Committee advances the work set forth in the IDA research agenda by publishing best practices and case studies on top issues facing urban districts, establishing data standards to calculate the value of center cities, and furthering industry benchmarking.

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THE VALUE OF U.S. DOWNTOWNS AND CENTER CITIES



Stantec's Urban Places

Project Advisors for The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities

Stantec's Urban Places is an interdisciplinary hub bringing together leaders in planning and urban design, transportation including smart and urban mobility, resilience, development, mixed-use architecture, smart cities, and brownfield redevelopment. They work in downtowns across North America—in cities and suburbs alike—to unlock the extraordinary urban promise of enhanced livability, equity, and resilience.

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SECTION ONE
PROJECT
OVERVIEW



Introduction

GREAT CITIES START DOWNTOWN

No city or region can succeed without a strong downtown, the place where compactness and density bring people, capital, and ideas together in ways that build the economy, opportunity, community and identity. Downtowns across the U.S. experienced unprecedented change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, in some ways the pandemic highlighted the importance of vibrant urban places. As urbanist Richard Florida describes, “downtowns today are not just places to live, work and shop: They are the very best places for people and businesses to connect to each other. In big metros and small, downtowns occupy the most central locations and have the highest concentrations of spaces where people can come together.”¹

Despite a relatively small share of a city’s overall geography, a downtown delivers significant economic and community benefits across both the city and region. Downtown serves as the epicenter of commerce, capital investment, diversity, public discourse, socialization, knowledge and innovation. In short, the proximity and density that downtown and center cities create drives the city around them to thrive.

While remote work is likely to reduce the daily number of office workers in downtowns in the long-term, other downtown activities are now thriving. Restaurant reservations are exceeding pre-pandemic levels, stadiums and sports arenas are full, and residential real estate in dense, urban areas continues to be in high demand. Downtowns are more than a central business district, and are adapting to become more well-rounded live, work and play communities. The 15-minute city, the idea that everyone living in a city should have access to essential daily services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride, has gained in popularity as an indirect result of the pandemic and reinforces the value of the mixed-use nature of many of our downtowns and center cities.²

In the coming years the ways we use and evaluate downtowns and center cities may shift, but downtowns’ resilience across economic, social, and environmental measures positions them well to lead citywide and regional transitions from recovery to growth. Downtowns have emerged from past crises even stronger, and there’s no reason to think they won’t this time.



About the Value of Downtowns Study

Building on IDA's unique industry-wide perspective and expertise, this study quantifies the value of U.S. downtowns and center cities across more than 150 metrics organized under five core value principles, with a focus on how downtowns contribute to the city and region around them. The *Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* study is a partnership between IDA and local urban place management organizations (UPMO).

The *Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* research articulates the inherent value a downtown provides to the greater city, highlighting a district's contributions based upon 150+ key data points in the principles of Economy, Inclusion, Vibrancy, Identity and Resilience. Our 2020 data showed that study downtowns outpaced their cities in residential growth between 2000 and 2020, growing an average of 46% against the citywide average of 15%.

The primary project goals are to:



Provide a **common set of metrics** to communicate the value of downtown.



Expand the **range of arguments** UPMOs* can make to their stakeholders using publicly available data.

IDA began this research in 2017, working with Stantec's Urban Places group and the first cohort of 13 UPMOs to develop a methodology for compiling and evaluating data from those 13 downtowns. In 2023, our analysis has expanded to include 49 downtowns and center cities across the U.S.

IDA and our UPMO partners work together to collect more than 150 individual metrics for the most recent year and over the past decade and three geographic levels (study area, city, and MSA/county). In addition, for employment data we collect three different jobs totals (primary, all jobs, and all private) for all years between 2002 and 2020 to show more nuanced employment trends over time. The demographic and jobs data included in the study does not extend beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, but some real estate, tax, and assessment data include 2022 and 2023 figures.

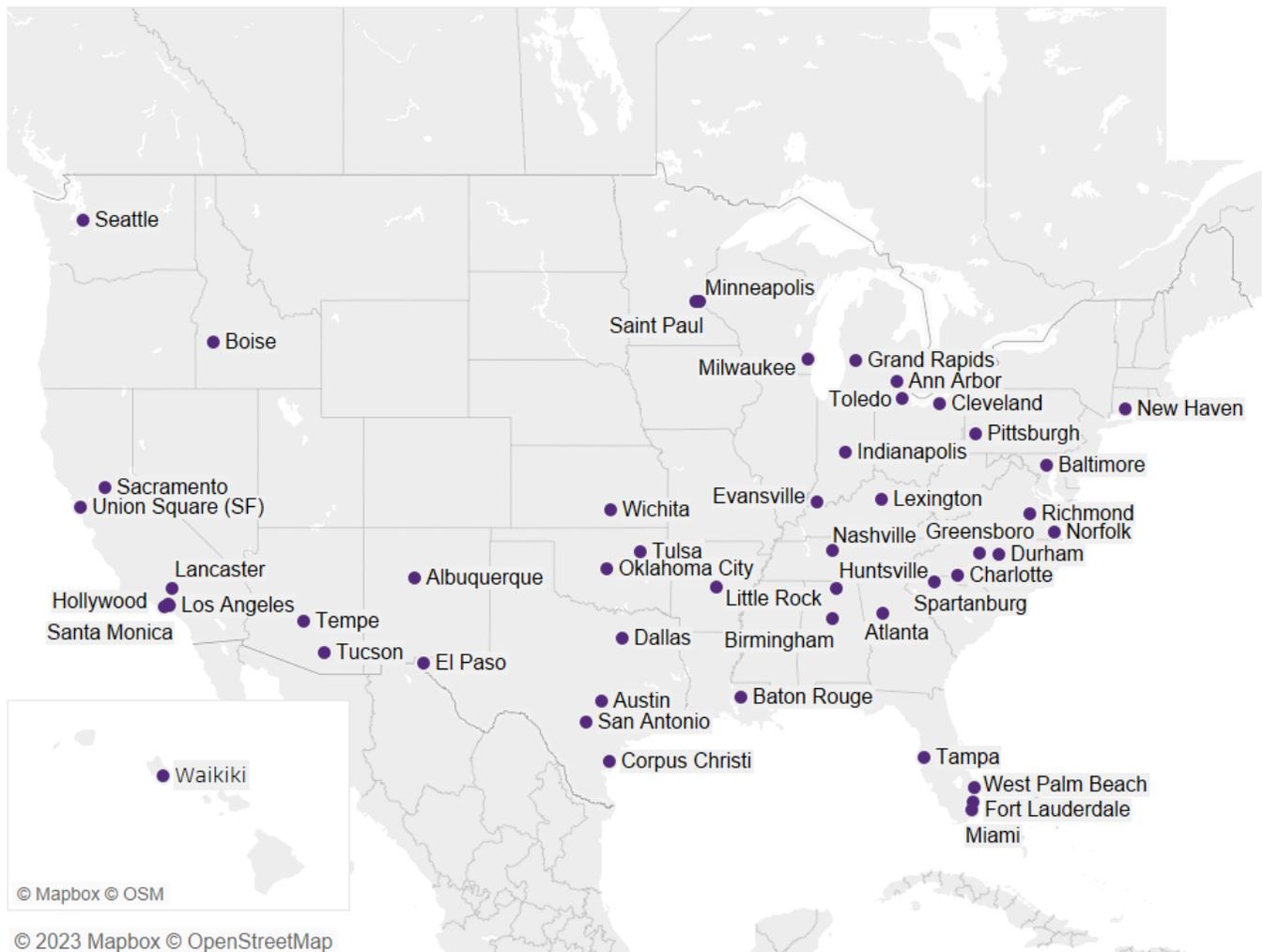
*Refer to the Appendix for the full methodology and list of metrics used in the study.

Urban Place Management Organizations

The place management industry brings the public and private sectors together to create vital, healthy, thriving cities for everyone — from residents to workers to tourists to business owners. We are downtown champions who bring city centers to life.

Since 1970, property and business owners in cities throughout the U.S. and other countries have realized that revitalizing and sustaining vibrant city centers and neighborhood districts requires special attention beyond the services city administrations could provide alone. These private-sector owners came together, with funding from the property and business owners, to form nonprofit management associations which deliver key services and activities within the boundaries of their districts. These place management organizations are often called Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), Partnerships and Alliances.

Value of Downtowns Participants



ECONOMY



Downtowns and center cities are valuable due to their roles as economic anchors for their regions. As traditional centers of commerce, transportation, education, and government, downtowns and center cities frequently serve as hubs of industry and revenue generators, despite their only making up a small fraction of the city's or region's land area. Downtowns support high percentages of jobs across many different industries and skill levels. Because of a relatively high density of economic activity, investment in the center city provides a greater return per dollar for both public and private sectors than investments elsewhere.

INCLUSION



As the literal and figurative heart of their cities, downtowns represent and welcome residents, employees, and visitors from all walks of life. Residents of strong downtowns often come from a wide range of racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, and from across all ages. This diversity ensures that as an inclusive place, downtown has a broad appeal to all users and a strong social fabric. Downtowns provide access to all to opportunity, essential services, culture, recreation, entertainment and civic activities.

VIBRANCY



The ability of vibrant places to attract visitors and new residents, as well as a regionwide consumer base, creates value. Vibrancy means the buzz of activity and excitement that comes with high-quality experiential offerings like breweries, restaurants, theatres, or outdoor events. Many unique regional cultural institutions, businesses, centers of innovation, public spaces and activities are located downtown. As the cultural center of their cities, downtowns typically attract a large share of citywide visitors and account for a large share of citywide hotels and hotel rooms.

IDENTITY



Downtowns and center cities often serve as iconic symbols of their cities, creating a strong sense of place that enhances local pride. The authentic cultural offerings in downtown enhance its character, heritage, and beauty, and create an environment that other parts of the city can't easily replicate. Combining community history and personal memory, a downtown's cultural value plays a central role in preserving and promoting regional identity. Downtowns and center cities serve as places for regional residents to come together, participate in civic life, and celebrate their region, which in turn promotes tourism and civic society.

RESILIENCE



Downtowns and center cities play a crucial role in building stability, sustainability, and prosperity for the city and region. Their diversity, concentration of economic activity, and density of services better equip them to adapt to economic and social shocks than more homogenous communities. They can play a key role in advancing regional resilience, particularly in the wake of economic and environmental shocks, which often disproportionately affect less economically and socially dynamic areas.





SECTION TWO
DOWNTOWN
PROFILE

Downtown Profile | Overview

A city's strength and prosperity depend on a strong downtown and center city, which serve as centers of culture, knowledge, and innovation. The performance of districts and center cities strengthens an entire region's economic productivity, inclusion, vibrancy, identity, and resilience.

Downtown Milwaukee has an outsized impact on the region. Although it comprises just under 3% of the city's land area, downtown is home to 5.1% of the city's population and 31% of its jobs. Collectively, these factors power an economic engine that accounts for about 21% of the city's property tax income — over seven times the average revenue per square mile generated in the rest of the city.

One of downtown's greatest strengths is its status as an epicenter of regional employment. Dominated by three key sectors — finance and insurance; public administration; and professional, technical, and scientific services — downtown concentrates 80,300 primary jobs in just 2.8 square miles. This employment landscape is growing, too. Between 2002 and 2019, downtown saw 11% growth in primary jobs. Even with some setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, a promising influx of more than 7,000 new or recently committed jobs has fueled a strong economic recovery — especially among younger firms. From 2011 to 2020, employment at businesses under three years old in downtown increased by 26%, significantly outpacing the city's overall job growth of 2% and indicating that downtown is becoming increasingly attractive for entrepreneurs.

Downtown's success isn't limited to its historic function as a destination for work. Home to nearly 30,000 residents, it's rapidly transforming into a place where people choose to live. Since 2000, downtown's population has grown by 35%, with much of this growth occurring within the past decade. It's bucking citywide trends; downtown grew by 5% since 2017, even as the city's overall population shrank by 3.5% during the same period. With 2,000 rental units under construction as of 2023 and an additional 5,000 units in the pipeline, this trend isn't expected to subside anytime soon as developers respond to the heightened demand for downtown housing. This dynamic has pushed median gross rents downtown to a level approximately 19% higher than elsewhere in the city, even though downtown's density

Study Area



DOWNTOWN PARTNER

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21

CITY

Milwaukee, WI

of housing, concentration of jobs, and access to public transportation make it a less expensive place to live than the region on average.

For business owners and residents alike, downtown is a clear destination for fun. Hosting an array of theaters and live entertainment venues, the newly branded Milwaukee Theater District boasts the highest number of theater seats per capita in the U.S., attracting two million attendees to over 2,100 performances annually. This vibrant entertainment industry employs more than 1,000 people and generates around \$400 million in visitor spending. In addition, the area is a hotspot for conventions, aided by 33 hotels offering nearly 5,900 rooms — a 113% increase since 2010. The growth in the hospitality sector, which saw a 15% rise in employment between 2010 and 2019, shows no signs of letting up, with more rooms in the pipeline. Meanwhile, downtown's numerous parks and public spaces, which have been activated in recent years with interactive public art installations and events, contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of downtown.

The central role that downtown occupies in Milwaukee's economy highlights the significance of entities like the Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District (BID) #21 in fostering and maintaining a robust local economy. Founded in 1998, the BID funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe, and friendly downtown. The organization currently manages 150 blocks representing approximately 500 commercial property owners.

Inventory	Downtown	% of City	Per Square Mile	Growth 2010–2022
 OFFICE (SF)	17.5M	34%	6.3M	13%
 RETAIL (SF)	4.3M	11%	1.5M	n/a
 RESIDENTIAL UNITS	18.8K	7.3%	6.8K	16.9%
 HOTEL (ROOMS)	5,879	60%	1,960	113%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2010); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021), Newmark, CoStar (2023)

Note: Retail real estate figures include only retail buildings and not ground floor retail spaces in other kinds of buildings, and as such significantly undercounts downtown retail space.

Residential Population	Downtown	City	Region
Population	29,345	578,198	2,043,851
Residential Share	n/a	5.1%	1.4%
Share of Land Area	n/a	2.9%	0.1%
Residents Per Acre	16.7	9.4	1.2
Growth 2017-2021	4.9%	-3.5%	0.1%
Growth 2012-2021	17.1%	-2.7%	1.3%
Growth 2000-2021	35.3%	-3.1%	5.7%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000, 2010); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Employment 2020	Downtown	City	Region
Primary Jobs	80,332	255,187	928,393
All Jobs	84,896	276,971	999,896
Share of Land Area	n/a	2.9%	0.1%
District Share Of All Jobs	n/a	31%	8%
District Share Of Primary Jobs	n/a	31%	9%
Employees Per Acre (Primary)	45.6	4.1	0.6
Primary Employment Growth 2002–2020	6%	-8%	3%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

Ranking Downtown Milwaukee

Using data collected for *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* study, we identified three tiers of districts, defined by their stage of development. We divided the study districts into *established*, *growing*, and *emerging* tiers based on the citywide significance of downtown population and jobs, density of residents and jobs within the district, assessed value per square mile, and the rate of growth in population and jobs from 2000 to 2021. **This analysis places Milwaukee among the established tier of downtowns.**

Downtowns in the *established* tier have high density and a high degree of citywide significance in terms of jobs, population, and land values. Most *established* districts continue to grow in these areas, although more slowly than districts in the *growing* tier. They also tend to cover a larger proportion of citywide land area.

Please view the Summary section of this report for data comparing downtown Milwaukee to its peers within the *established* tier. For the full set of cities by tier, accompanying data points, and methodology, refer to *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* compendium, which is available on the IDA website, downtown.org.

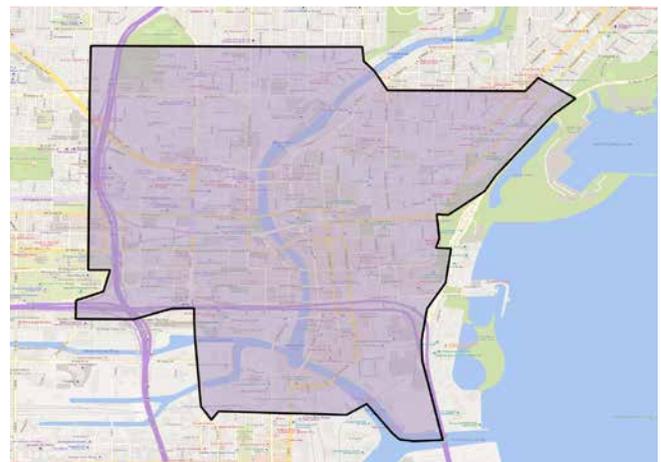
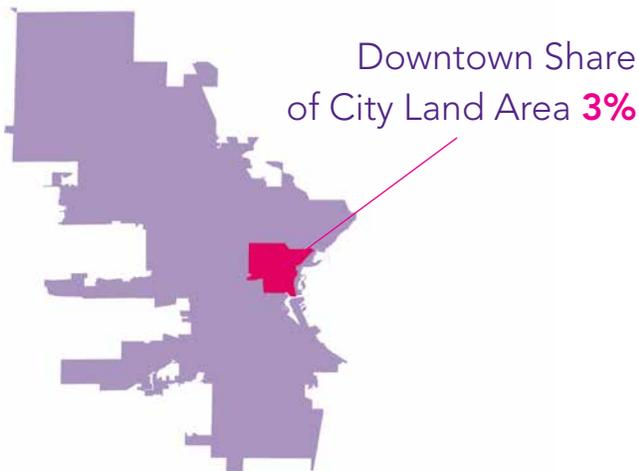
Established Downtowns

- Baltimore
- Fort Lauderdale
- Miami
- **Milwaukee**
- Minneapolis
- New Haven
- Pittsburgh
- Richmond
- Saint Paul
- San Francisco
- Seattle
- West Palm Beach

Defining Boundaries

IDA worked with Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 to align the study area with Census block group boundaries which closely aligned with the public perception of downtown. This facilitates easy incorporation of publicly available data from a variety of sources, while matching the boundary to hard edges such as roads, water, natural features, or highways as much as possible. The study area is roughly bounded by I-43 on the west, West Brown Street and East Brady Street on the north, Lincoln Memorial Drive on the east, and West Florida Avenue on the south. The city is Milwaukee, and regional figures

correspond to the Milwaukee 7 region, comprising seven counties in southeastern Wisconsin: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Waukesha, and Washington Counties. In most visualizations, the downtown study area is shown as ending at East Royall Place in the northeast corner. The study area statistics include Block Group 1 of Census Tract 1869, which continues on past East Royall Place to East North Avenue. However, beyond Royall Place the area captured by this block group is almost entirely park land, with little population or employment, and so the boundary is visualized as ending at Royall Place to avoid confusion about the extent of the study.



Economy | Impact, Innovation

Downtowns make up a small share of their city's land area but have substantial economic importance. While downtowns and center cities constitute a small share of citywide land area, there's no understating their regional economic importance.

As traditional centers of commerce, transportation, education, and government, downtowns serve as economic anchors for their cities and regions. Thanks to highly concentrated economic activity, investment in the center city yields a high level of return per dollar. Urban centers across the U.S. were the first areas to recover from the Great Recession, and although the continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has raised many questions about the future, prior analysis of the role of downtowns and center cities highlights their unique ability to absorb and recover from economic shocks and stresses.

Benefits of Economy: Economic Output, Economic Impact, Investment, Creativity, Innovation, Visitation, Spending, Density, Sustainability, Tax Revenue, Scale, Commerce, Opportunity

Jobs

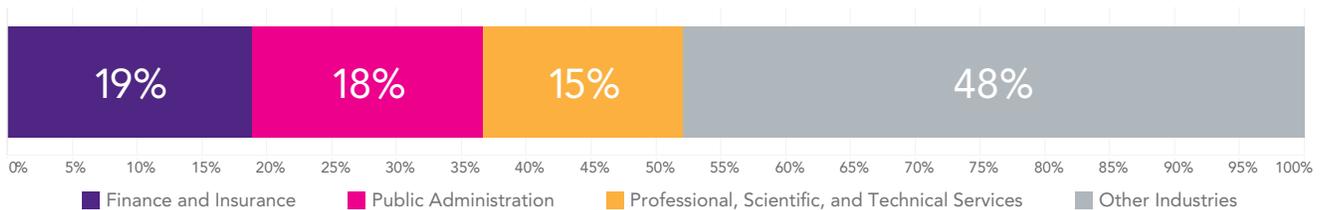
Downtown serves as a major hub for employment. In 2020, 31% of Milwaukee's jobs were situated in the downtown area, which comprises only 2.8 square miles — or less than 3% — of the city's total land area. This includes 28% of Milwaukee's private-sector jobs.

Downtown's employment landscape is dominated by three main industries: finance and insurance; public administration; and professional, technical, and scientific services. Together, these three industries represent nearly 42,000 downtown jobs, half of the study area's primary employment.

Finance and insurance jobs are especially concentrated downtown; 85% of the city's jobs in this sector are located in Milwaukee's commercial core. It represents downtown's largest employment sector by volume, too, with 15,200 jobs as of 2020. Although employment in finance and insurance did recede somewhat from its peak of 18,000 jobs in 2007

in the wake of the Great Recession, the sector's decline has leveled off since 2017, with almost no growth or loss of employment in recent years. Northwestern Mutual — one of downtown's largest employers — recently announced plans to relocate an additional 2,000 jobs to downtown Milwaukee, boosting its already-high share of jobs in the finance and insurance sector.¹ Additionally, Fortune 250 company Fiserv, a financial services business which is also the naming sponsor for the arena which hosts Milwaukee's NBA team, is currently building out 160,000 square feet of former vacant office space for their new headquarters and more than 750 employees.² Similarly, Baird, another of downtown's major employers in this sector, reaffirmed its commitment to downtown by extending its office lease on a space used by 1,600 employees.³ Other large employers in this industry downtown include US Bank, Associated Bank, and BMO Bank.

Top Downtown Industries



Source: LEHD On the Map (2002–2020)

Downtown Milwaukee also has a substantial number of public administration employees, with 90% of the city's jobs and 41% of the region's jobs in this sector located downtown. Not only City Hall, but Milwaukee County government offices and a significant presence of state and federal jobs, all contribute to the 14,400 public administration jobs downtown. Traditionally a stabilizing force in any downtown area, employment in this sector has remained nearly unchanged since 2015. Meanwhile, professional, technical, and scientific services — a broad category comprising a range of traditional “white collar” professions, such as accounting, architecture and engineering, legal services, and marketing — has been growing steadily in downtown Milwaukee. Comprising 12,300 jobs as of 2020, this sector grew by 19% between 2010 and 2020, a bright spot of growth during a period of generally level employment downtown. Growth within this sector has been amplified further by the recent relocation of large engineering and urban planning firms like HNTB and GRAEF moving their Milwaukee-area headquarters and hundreds of employees downtown.

Even though downtown already boasts a significant number of jobs, employment in the area has continued its gradual upswing over the past two decades. Between 2002 to 2019, primary employment — defined as an individual's highest-paying job if they have more than one — rose by 11% downtown. In 2020, however, the number of primary jobs downtown declined slightly, to 80,300 from 83,800 one year prior, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This represents a 4% decrease, on par with the decline in citywide primary employment during the same timeframe. Losses were most heavily concentrated in areas commonly associated with pandemic job loss: accommodation and food services (lost 1,900 primary jobs, -29%); arts, entertainment, and recreation (lost 600 primary jobs, -23%); administration, support, and waste management (lost 600 primary jobs, -8%). However, this data only extends to 2020, and as such does not capture the significant and rapid recovery both nationally and in downtown Milwaukee in recent years. In 2022, the Milwaukee Public Market posted its highest attendance numbers since its creation in 2005, and workers in Milwaukee's food and beverage industry continue to be in demand with the opening of the 3rd St. Market Hall in 2022, which hosts over 20 restaurants and a large central bar. New projects like the Franks Productions concert venue,

Employment (Primary Jobs)



31%
CITYWIDE
JOBS



28%
CITY'S PRIVATE
JOBS



85%
CITY'S FINANCE
& INSURANCE
JOBS



51%
CITY'S REAL
ESTATE JOBS



90%
CITY'S PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
JOBS



38%
CITY'S
KNOWLEDGE
INDUSTRY JOBS

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

expansion of the Baird Center, and a new 8,000 seat soccer stadium at the center of the Iron District will further amplify this sector and serve as a growth engine for downtown's economy

The rate of growth for all jobs in downtown Milwaukee is just slightly below the average for other *established* downtowns but aligns with the average growth rate across all downtowns in IDA's study. The future looks promising for downtown Milwaukee with an influx of more than 7,000 jobs that have either been introduced or have recently announced plans to move downtown.⁴

Employment

	Downtown Milwaukee	Established Downtowns	Study Average
CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT 2002–2020	6%	10%	5%
CITYWIDE JOBS	31%	41%	24%
CITYWIDE KNOWLEDGE JOBS	38%	47%	27%
CITYWIDE CREATIVE JOBS	29%	44%	31%
RESIDENTS HOLDING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	59%	58%	51%



Source: LEHD On the Map (2020), American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Knowledge Industry Employment Totals

Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing



Management of Companies and Enterprises



Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services



Information



Health Care and Social Assistance



Total Knowledge Jobs



Downtown	17K	5K	12K	2K	3K	40K
City	22K	14K	16K	5K	48K	105K
Region	56K	32K	46K	14K	149K	299K

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

Small Businesses & Startups

A strong entrepreneurial environment that supports both small businesses and startups in all industries is critical to a thriving downtown. Small businesses generate new jobs, promote innovation and competition, and account for almost half of U.S. economic activity.*

Downtown Milwaukee's employment landscape is generally dominated by larger and older firms. 88% of private employment is located at businesses older than 10 years old, and 70% of private employment is at a firm with 250 or more employees. These figures are typical of *established* downtowns, which average 70% of jobs at firms of 250+ employees and 84% of jobs at firms 11 years or older. Although this dynamic can present challenges for small businesses and startups seeking a foothold, these established, large enterprises and their leadership are pivotal for the post-pandemic return to offices, bringing workers back into the heart of Milwaukee in droves.

There are encouraging signs that small businesses and startups are on the rise downtown. Between 2011 and 2020, the number of jobs at businesses less than three years old grew by 26%, far faster than the city growth of 2%. Even though downtown's 4.3% job share in these younger firms lags behind the city's 6% share, this suggests a growing appeal for entrepreneurs to set up their ventures downtown. Downtown's share of jobs at new firms is typical of *established* downtowns, which tend to grow less quickly than the other tiers in IDA's study. *Established* downtowns average 5% of private employment at firms under three years of age, similar to the 4.3% share in downtown Milwaukee. The influx of these newer businesses signals the potential for additional job creation, further amplifying downtown Milwaukee's success and providing new employment opportunities for the entire region.

Meanwhile, downtown Milwaukee is home to considerably fewer small firms. Only 8.3% of downtown's private employment is at firms with fewer than 20 employees, compared with 14% citywide. This is slightly lower than the average for *established* downtowns, where 11% of private employment is at these smaller firms again showcasing the high concentration of large legacy firms in downtown Milwaukee.

* US Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy (2018, Dec 19). Advocacy Releases "Small Business GDP, 1998-2014". <https://advocacy.sba.gov/2018/12/19/advocacy-releases-small-business-gdp-1998-2014/>



Jobs by Firm Size

	Downtown	City	Region
< 20 PEOPLE	8%	14%	15%
20-249 PEOPLE	21%	24%	26%
250+ PEOPLE	70%	62%	58%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)



Jobs by Firm Age (2018-2020)

	Downtown	City	Region
< 3 YEARS	4%	6%	5%
4-10 YEARS	7%	11%	9%
11+ YEARS	88%	83%	85%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)





Jobs by Earnings Annually

	Downtown	City	Region
\$15K OR LESS	13%	18%	21%
\$15K TO \$40K	19%	27%	28%
\$40K OR MORE	68%	55%	51%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)



Land Value and Assessment

	Downtown	City
ASSESSED VALUE	\$7.19B	\$34.8B
TOTAL PROPERTY TAX	\$171M	\$830M
% OF CITY'S PROPERTY TAX	20.6%	n/a
LAND AREA IN SQUARE MILES	2.8	96
ASSESSED VALUE PER SQUARE MILE	\$2.6B	\$362.5M
PROPERTY TAX PER SQUARE MILE	\$59M	\$8.6M

Source: City of Milwaukee Department of City Development (2023)

Fiscal Impact

Downtowns typically concentrate the densest development, highest property values, and best paying jobs in their region. This is especially true in downtown Milwaukee, which boasts more than 17 million square feet of office space — more than one-third of the city's total office space — in just 2.8 square miles. Its office inventory grew by 13% from 2010 to 2022, even as more than 1.5 million square feet of older office property was undergoing adaptive reuse to hospitality and residential uses. Downtown also has at least 4.3 million square feet of retail space, representing roughly 11% of the city's retail space.

Downtown has a high share of jobs at the highest earning levels, 68% of downtown jobs pay \$40,000 or more annually, and 39% of Milwaukee's jobs at that pay level are found downtown.

Downtown's density positions it as the economic engine of the Milwaukee region. With an estimated total property value of \$7.2 billion, downtown concentrates nearly 21% of the city's total property value in less than 3% of the land area. This translates to property values of \$2.6 billion per square mile — seven times higher than citywide average land values. Downtown properties also have long fueled a large share of revenue for the entire city and county. Property tax revenues from downtown properties total over \$171 million, distributed among various taxing entities, including the City, County, and School Board. Between 2010 and 2022, property tax revenues from downtown soared by 53%, a pace that considerably outstripped the 16% growth of the city's entire property tax roll in the same duration. Recently passed 2.0% and 0.4% sales tax increases in the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County respectively will further amplify downtown's fiscal significance to the city and county, as downtown is also at the heart of Milwaukee's entertainment, food and beverage, and retail environment.⁵

Inclusion | Diversity, Affordability

Downtowns and center cities invite and welcome all residents, employees, and visitors by providing access to jobs, housing, essential services, culture, recreation, entertainment, and participation in civic activities.

A strong sense of inclusion and social cohesion keeps communities strong. Continuing to create a downtown that is equitable, inclusive, and welcoming to everyone was a central theme in the recently adopted update to the downtown area plan, coined “Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040.”⁶

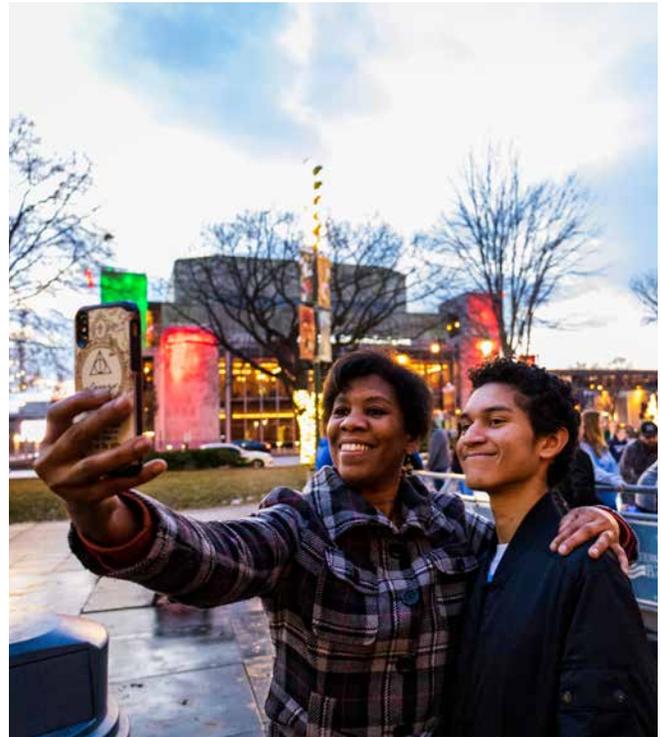
Benefits of Inclusion: Equity, Affordability, Civic Participation, Civic Purpose, Culture, Mobility, Accessibility, Tradition, Heritage, Services, Opportunity, Workforce Diversity

Racial Diversity

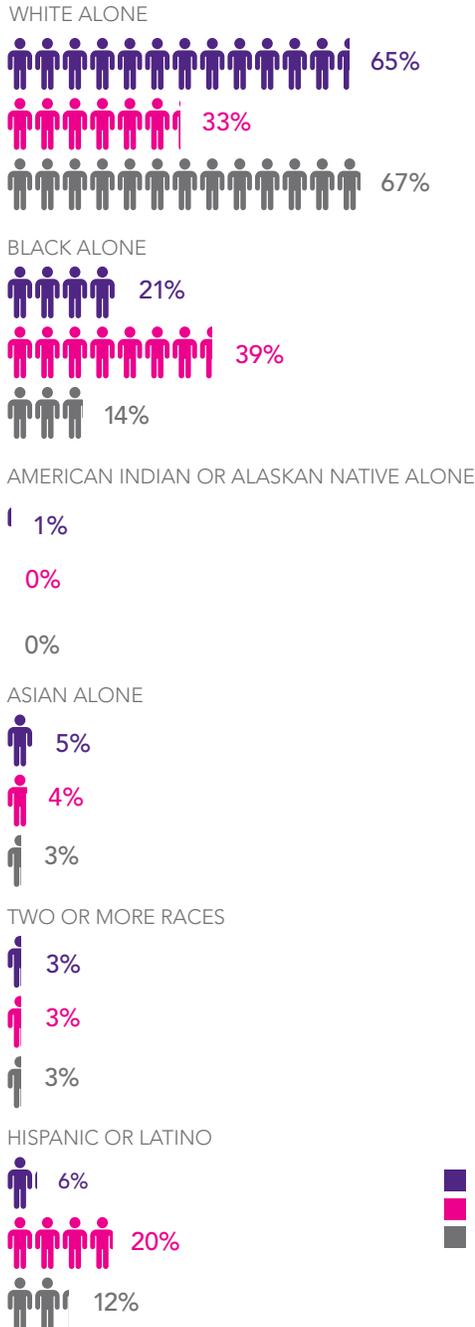
While overall racial diversity has been increasing downtown, downtown Milwaukee's population is majority White, with 65% of residents who live downtown self-reporting as “White alone” in the most recent American Community Survey. That's almost double the citywide rate, where 33% of residents identified as “White alone.” At the same time, downtown has roughly half the share of Black residents than the city (21% downtown vs. 39% citywide) and about one-third of the share of Hispanic or Latino residents (6% downtown vs. 20% citywide).

The trends for Black and White residents have remained relatively stable in recent years, even as downtown's population has grown by 21%. However, while the total numbers remain relatively small, there has been significant growth in the populations of other minority groups, including Hispanic and Latino residents (63% increase), Asian and Pacific Islanders (21% increase), and those who identify as two or more races (138% increase).

Meanwhile, downtown's workers are far more reflective of the racial diversity of the city's labor force. 78% of those working downtown identify as White, compared with 73% for the city's workforce overall. 15% of workers are Black, compared with 21% for the city. And 8% of downtown workers report as Hispanic and Latino, closely mirroring the 10% share of those who make up Milwaukee's overall labor force.

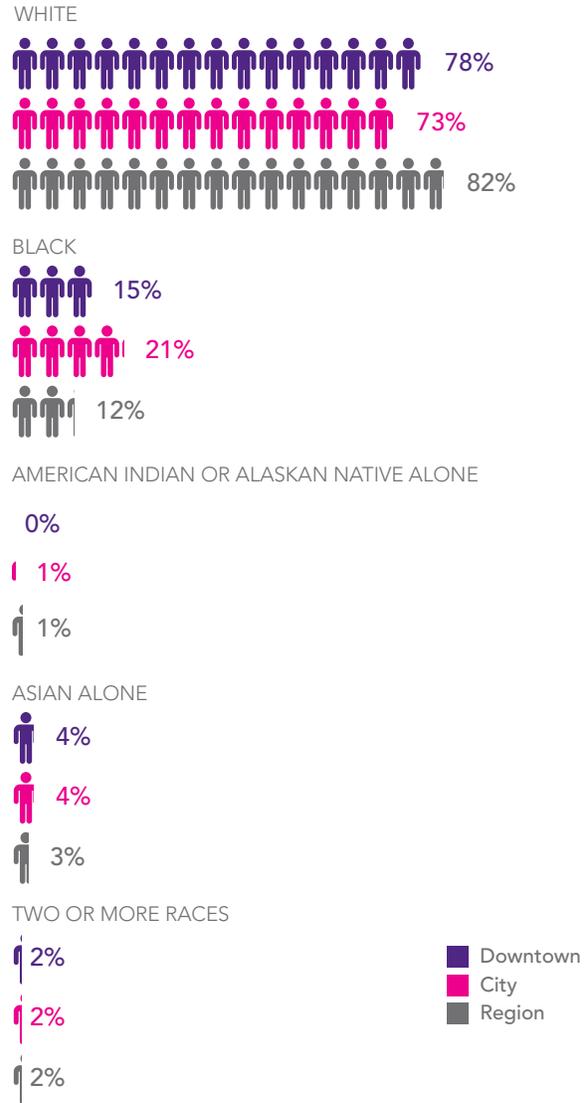


Residents By Race and Ethnicity



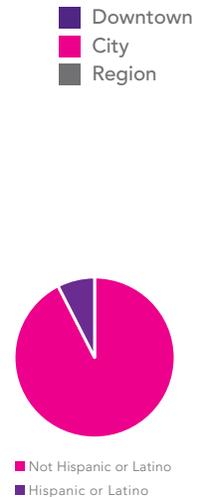
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Employment By Race



Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

Downtown Workers by Ethnicity



Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

Age Diversity

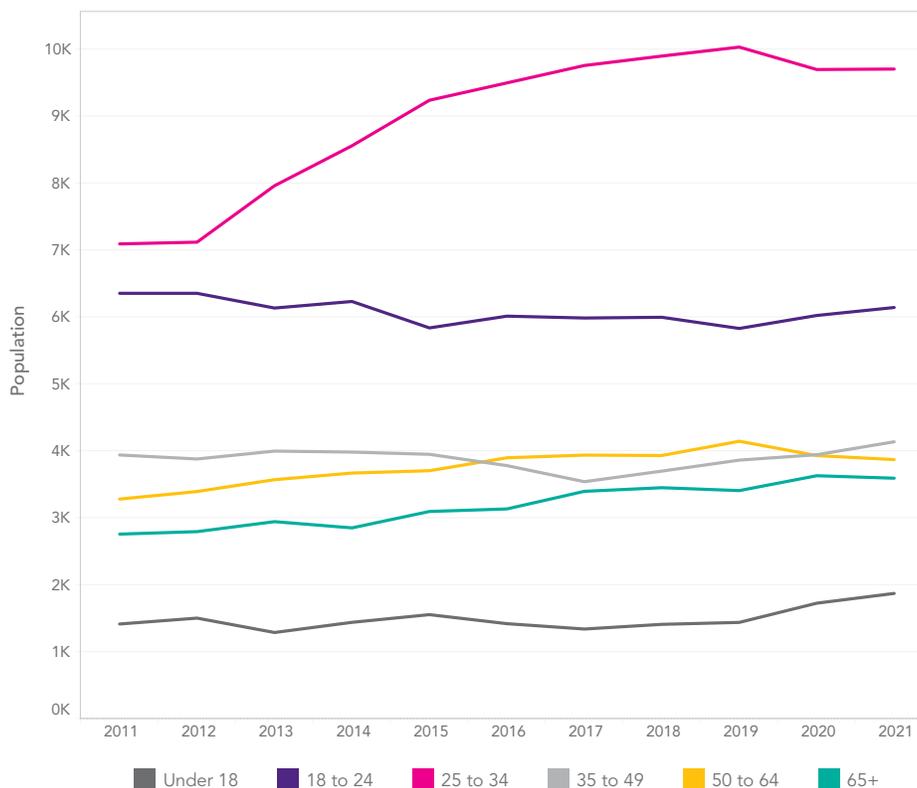
Downtown skews considerably younger than the city. More than half of downtown's residents, or 54%, fall between the ages of 18 and 34. In contrast, only 29% of the city's inhabitants fall within this age bracket. At the same time, downtown has fewer residents below 18 or above 65, with 20% of people downtown belonging to these age ranges, compared to more than one-third in the broader city population.

Most of downtown's population growth has come from those aged 25 to 34. Comprising the largest segment of downtown's population by age at 33%, this age group accounts for approximately 60% of downtown's population growth since 2010. The second-fastest-growing age group — people 65 years old and above — makes up approximately 30% of downtown's population growth in this same period. Meanwhile, other age groups have shrunk or grown slowly.

Though the 35-49 age group decreased through most of the 2010s, that age group has experienced more recent growth since 2017.

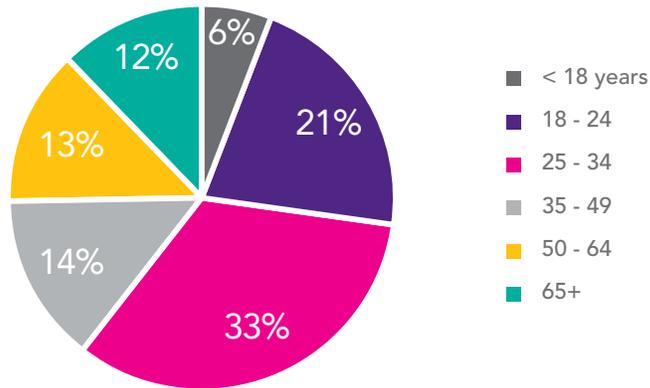
There are signs that the increase in the number of young people living downtown is contributing to another trend: a baby boom. The number of children under the age of five doubled in just five years between 2017 and 2021, reaching nearly 1,000 children under five. However, the number of children in older age brackets — for example, those aged 5 to 9 years old — remained unchanged. While it is still too early in this trend to be certain, this may indicate that young adults are staying downtown into their family formation years, but leaving downtown before their children reach school age, potentially due to the shortage of K-12 public school options in downtown. As a result, this downtown baby boom has not yet resulted in significant growth in the share of under-18 residents downtown.

Downtown Residents Age Breakdown

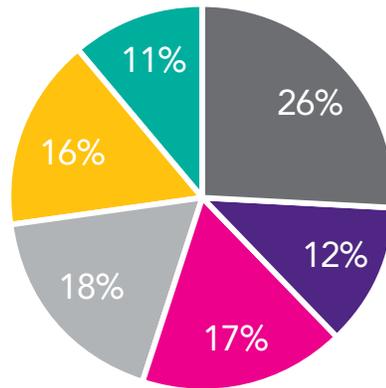


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Downtown Age Diversity



City Age Diversity



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Socioeconomic Diversity

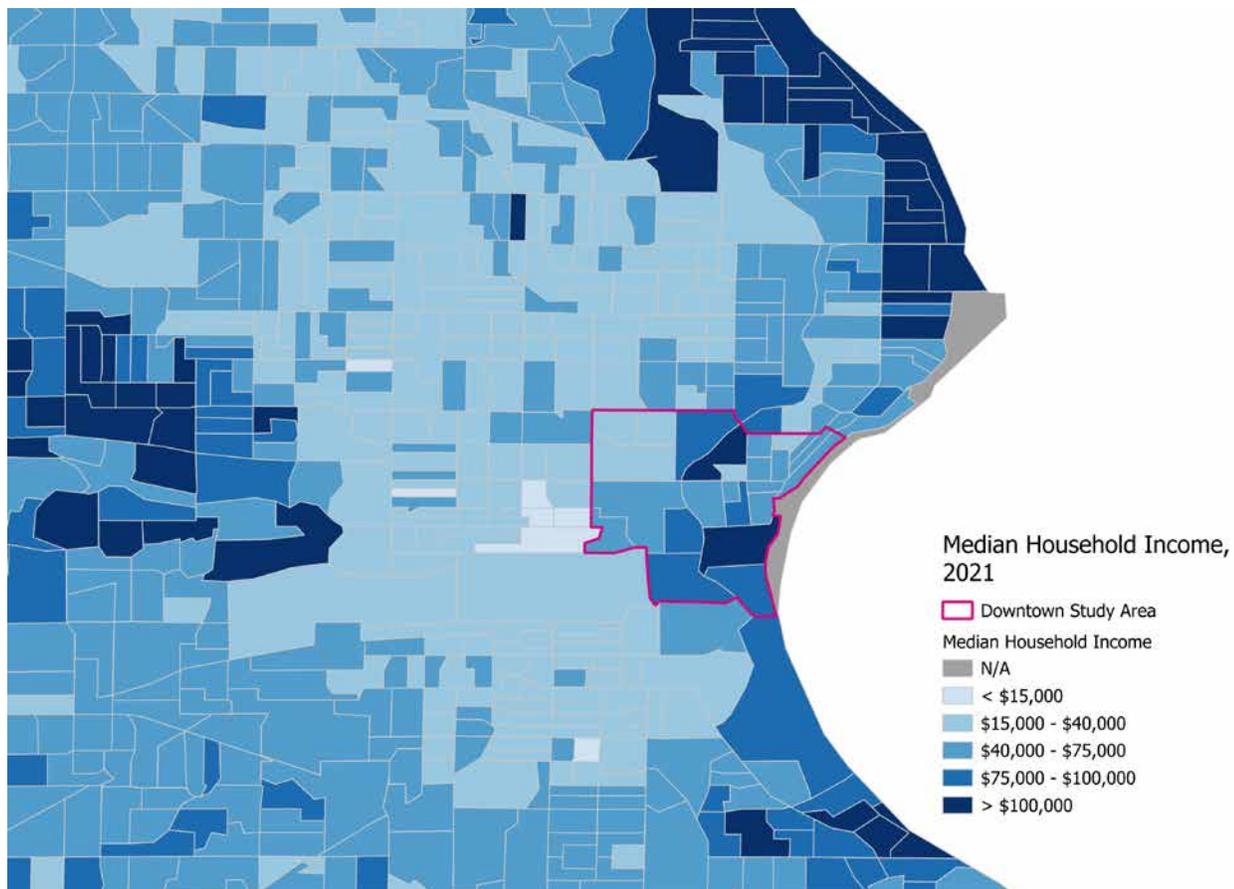
Downtown Milwaukee residents have higher incomes than those living in other parts of the city. The median household income downtown stands at \$58,000, which is notably higher than the citywide median of \$45,000, but still falls short of the regional median of \$67,000. This is more impressive when the high number of college students, who typically have very low incomes, living downtown is considered. Additionally, 32% of downtown households fall into the highest income bracket, defined as those earning above \$100,000. This suggests that downtown boasts nearly double the proportion of high-income earners than the city as a whole, mirroring the regional distribution. On the lower end of the income scale, 13% of downtown households earn less than \$15,000 annually, which is in line with Milwaukee’s overall percentage of 16% at this income level.

Household Income and Rent Growth Over Time



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2021)

Median Household Income



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Jobs by Educational Attainment (Workers 25+)

HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS



31% 37% 39%

SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE



31% 32% 33%

BACHELOR'S OR ADVANCED DEGREES



38% 31% 28%

WORKERS OVER 29

64K 200K 711K

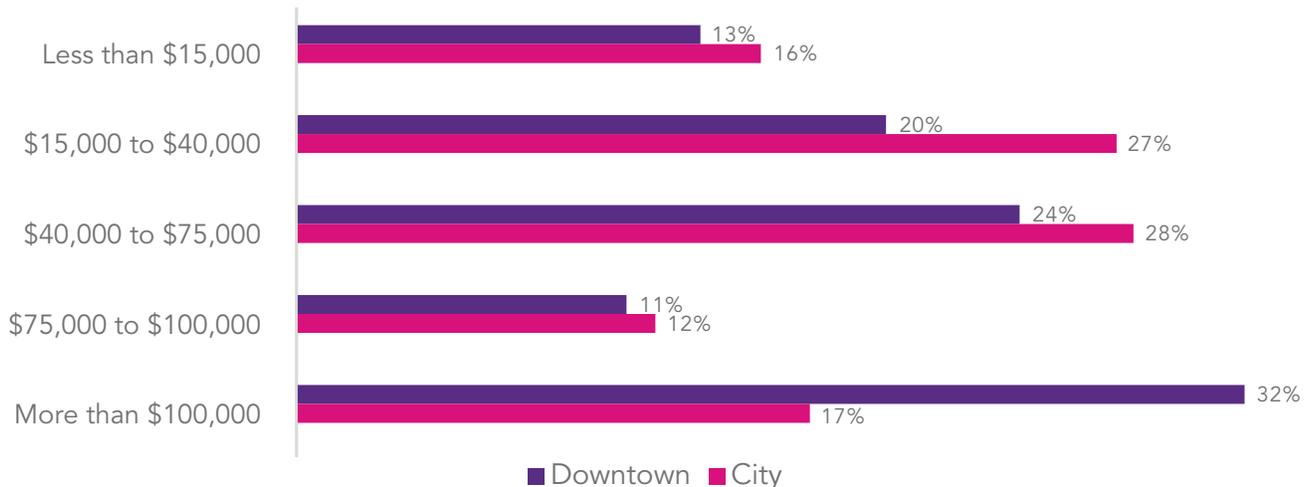
■ Downtown ■ City ■ Region

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

Since 2010, there's been a significant uptick in downtown's median household income, which has seen a 40% increase. By contrast, the median income across the city saw 26% growth during the same period. By 2021, there was an addition of 3,100 households downtown compared to 2010 figures, with households earning over \$75,000 witnessing an increase of 2,800.

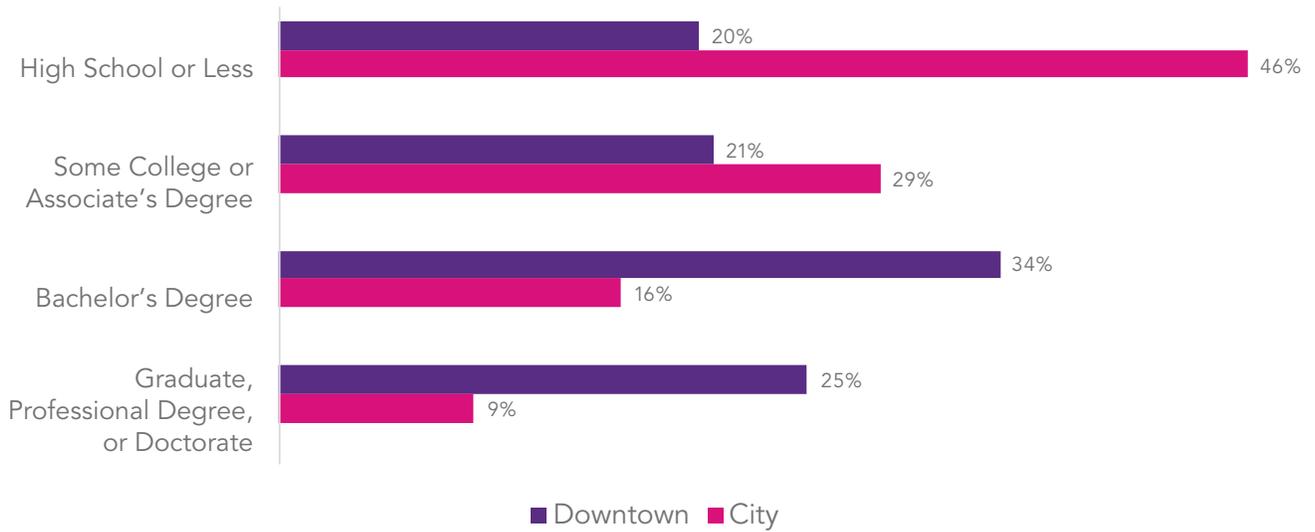
With this shift toward higher incomes, downtown has also seen a small increase in the share of residents who hold advanced degrees. Historically concentrating a significantly higher share of residents who hold college degrees than the city or region, nearly 60% of downtown's residents have a Bachelor's, Graduate, Doctorate, or Professional degree. Downtown's industries provide jobs for a mix of educational levels, ensuring that it is accessible as an employment hub for all Milwaukeeans.

Household Income - Age 25 and Older



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Educational Attainment for Residents 25+



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Housing and Affordability

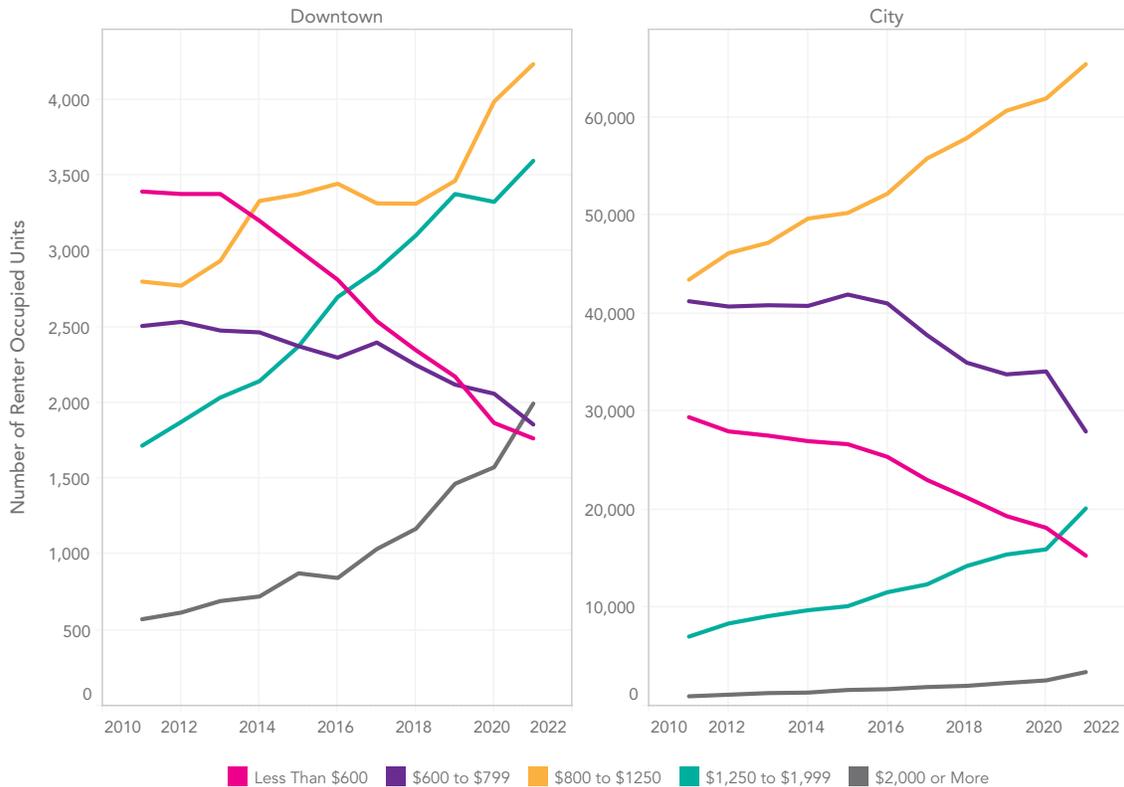
Despite downtowns generally being more expensive places to live, their density of housing, concentration of jobs, and access to public transportation can make living in a downtown less expensive than living in other neighborhoods when factoring in the cost of transportation. This isn't necessarily the case in downtown Milwaukee, where, according to the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Index, downtown residents spend roughly the same percentage of their income on housing and transportation together. However, at 39%, the Housing and Transportation Index for downtown is significantly lower than across the region, where nearly 50% of household incomes go toward the combined costs of housing and transportation.

By other standards, downtown residents live more within their means, too. Although rent prices vary, downtown is

home to a smaller share of residents who are considered rent-burdened, defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as spending more than 30% of income on housing costs. This may be due to the higher median incomes that exist downtown, or that there are several pockets of older housing stock within downtown, creating naturally affordable areas where median rents are at or below \$800. Still, overall median gross rent downtown is approximately 19% higher than in the city, according to ACS data, a sign that affordable housing is harder to find in the downtown area than elsewhere.

With 19% of housing units owner-occupied, downtown's rate of home ownership is far below the share of owner-occupied units in the city or region. This trend is on par with other downtowns, where the median owner-occupancy rate sits at 18%, according to IDA's study.

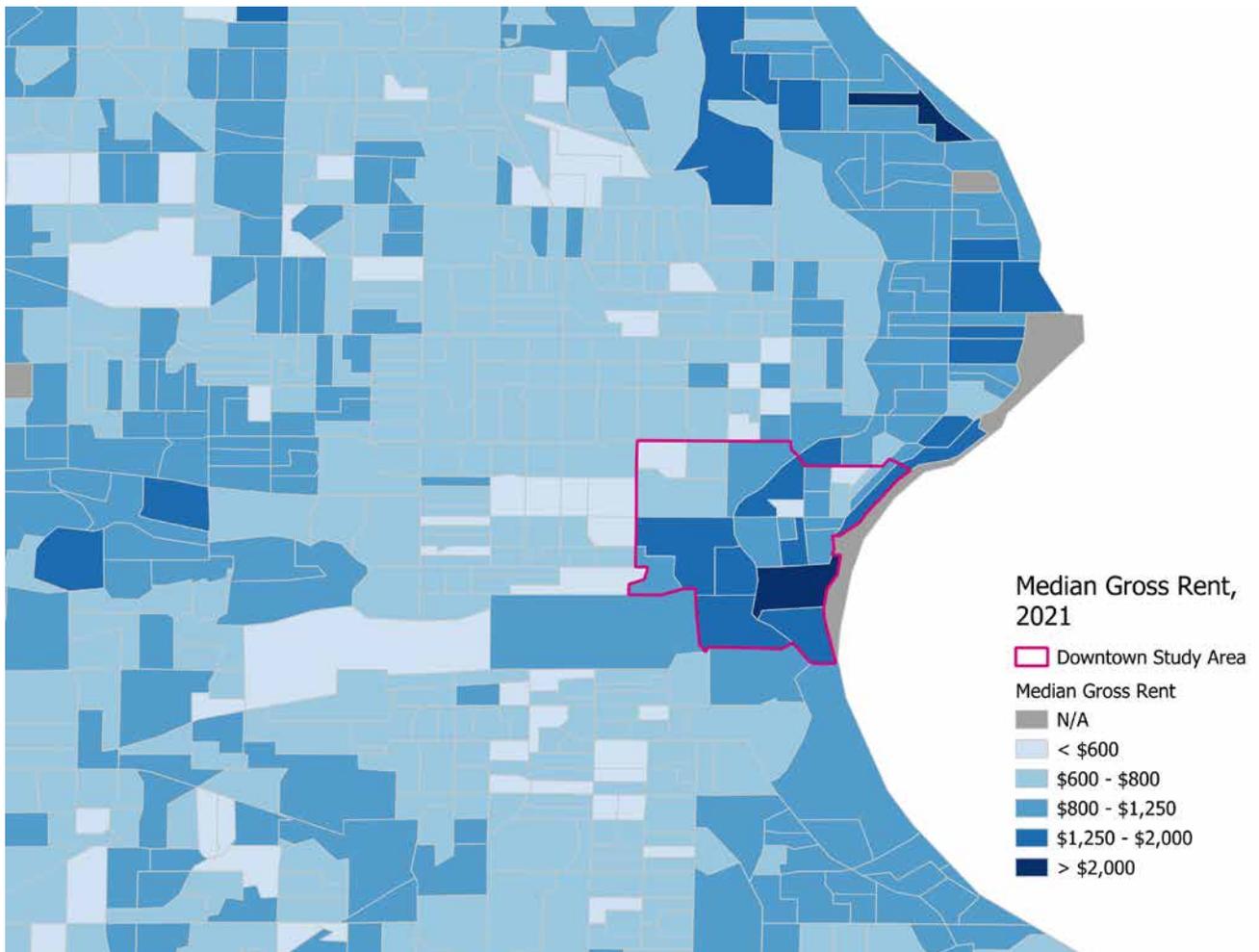
Rent Price Change Over Time



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010–2021)



Median Gross Rent



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Housing and Transportation Index

Downtown	City	Region
39%	38%	47%

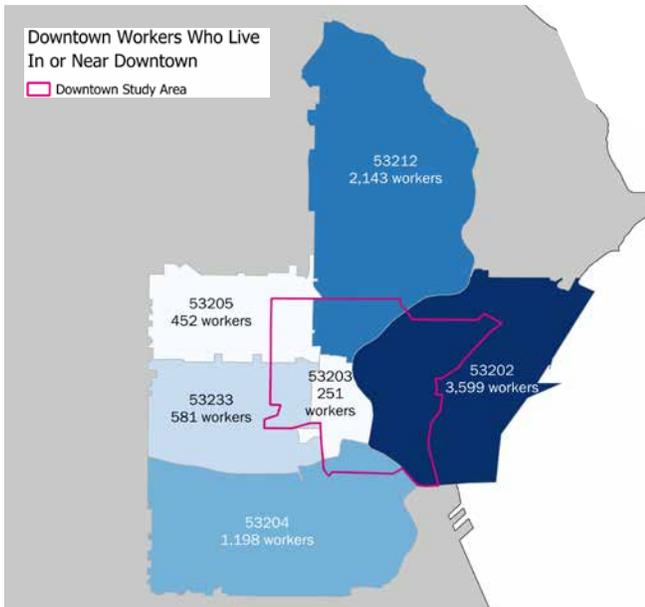
Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology (2019)

Downtown Renters

	Downtown	City	Region
% RENTER OCCUPIED	81%	59%	38%
MEDIAN GROSS RENT	\$1,085	\$910	\$962
MEDIAN RENT INCREASE 2010-2021	48%	24%	26%
RENT-BURDENED	37%	48%	44%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)
 Note: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines households spending more than 30% of their gross income as "rent burdened."

About 10% of downtown’s workforce lives in one of the ZIP codes which border downtown, and further an estimated 1 in 4 downtown workers lives within 3 miles of downtown, demonstrating both the ripple effects of downtown on the rest of Milwaukee and the importance of transit connections to downtown.



Residents

	Downtown Milwaukee	Established Downtown	Milwaukee City
GROWTH 2000–2021	35%	55%	-3%
DENSITY (RESIDENTS/ACRE)	17	20	9
MEDIAN INCOME	\$58K	\$72K	\$45K
DIVERSITY INDEX	55.6	68.6	79.9

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2021), ESRI Business Analyst Online (2022)

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

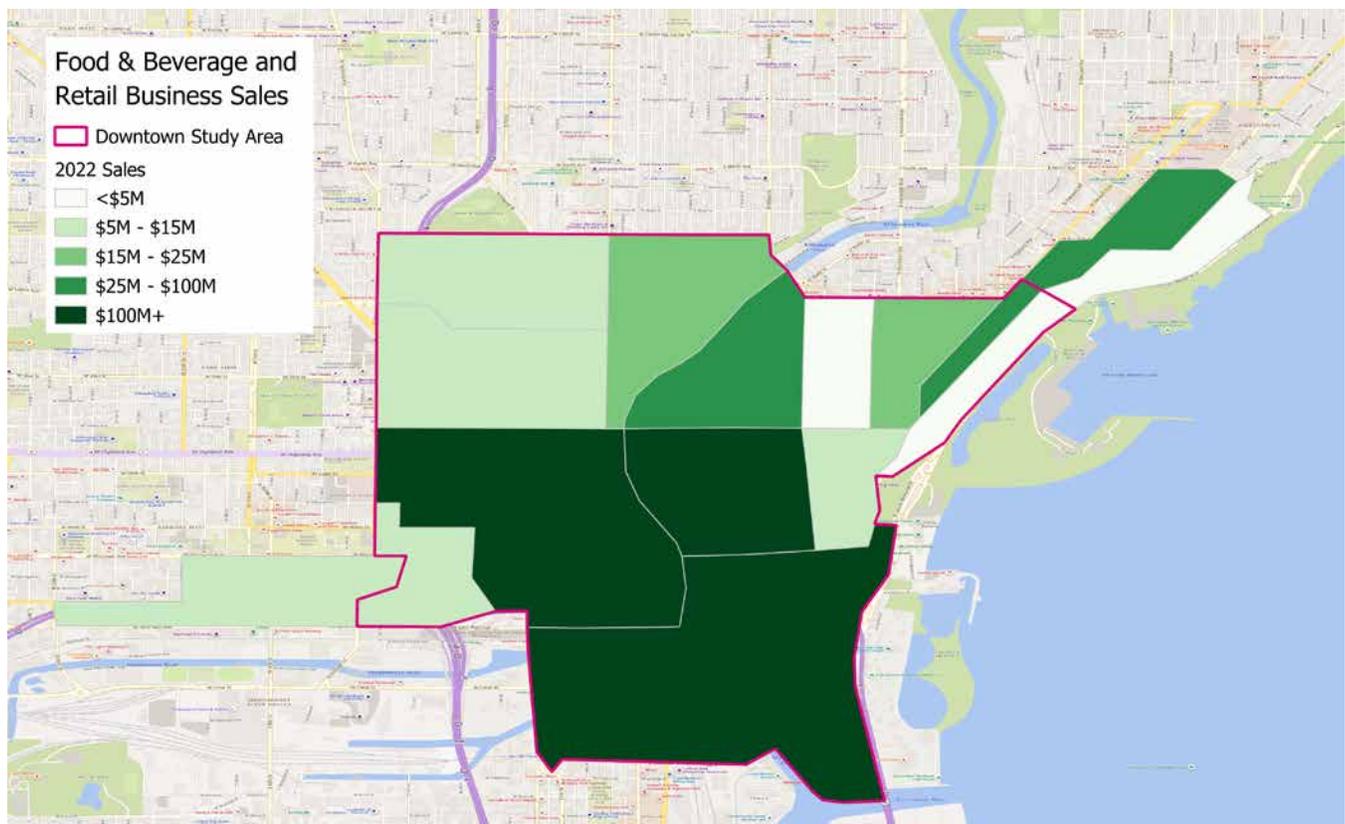


Retail Vitality

A downtown's retail environment acts as the heart of the community and a key reason for residents, workers, and visitors to come downtown. In Milwaukee, downtown's combination of population and employment density — coupled with its walkable, explorable environment — create a fertile environment for retail activity that has made downtown a shopping and dining hub for the city. 12% of Milwaukee's \$627 million in annual retail sales occur downtown, even though downtown represents less than 3% of the city's area. This translates to \$228 million in annual retail sales per square mile, roughly four times greater than the citywide rate of \$54 million per square mile. Furthermore, downtown has an estimated 200 retail businesses per square mile according to ESRI data, nearly 6 times as many as Milwaukee's city retail density of 36 retail businesses per square mile. While strong compared with the city, these values are on the lower end of *established* downtowns. Only two *established* downtowns — Saint Paul, Minnesota and

Richmond, Virginia — have lower retail sales per square mile among *established* downtowns, though downtown Milwaukee's gross retail sales are about the median for this tier of downtowns. This can in part be explained by the large share of the study area which is made up of dense but predominantly residential neighborhoods within downtown.

Downtown's retail and food and beverage business activity is particularly concentrated in the core of downtown and in the southern portion of the study area, south of Juneau Avenue, where three separate census tracts containing nightlife and entertainment districts had estimated sales in those business categories exceeding \$100 million in 2022. According to a recent study by Toast, Milwaukee's 2022 lunchtime transactions are only down by 1% compared to 2019 levels. This is one of the best results among the cities within the Toast study and indicates that the food and beverage business downtown has not been permanently damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰

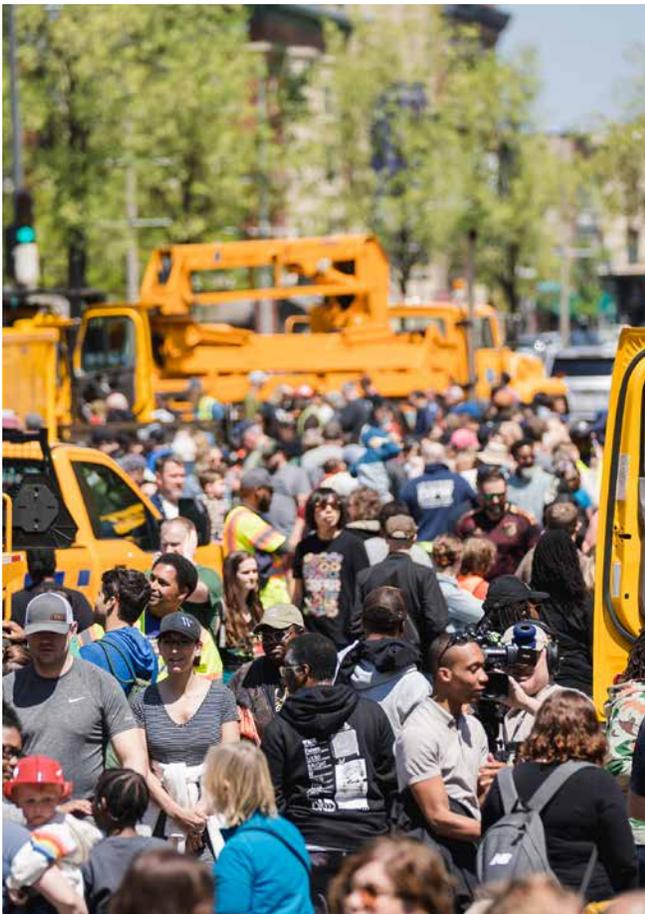


Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online (2022)

Retail Vitality

	Downtown Milwaukee	City
TOTAL RETAIL BUSINESSES	551	3,483
RETAIL BUSINESSES PER SQUARE MILE	200	36
TOTAL RETAIL SALES	\$627M	\$5.2B
RETAIL SALES PER SQUARE MILE	\$228M	\$54M

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2022)



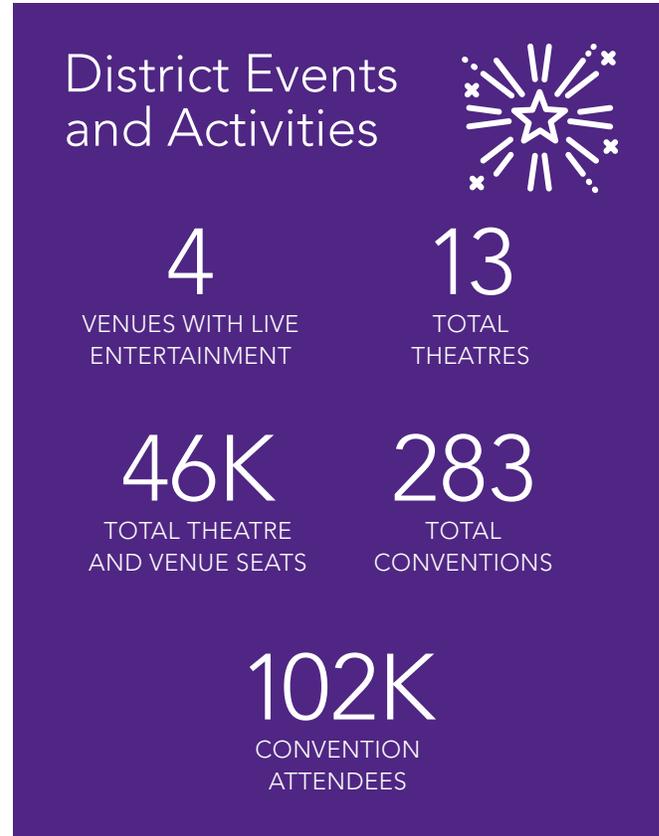
Live Events and Activities

Downtowns often serve their cities as centers of culture and recreation. That's evident in greater downtown Milwaukee, which is home to 13 theatres and 4 other venues offering live entertainment. Venues like the Pabst Theater, Riverside Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Fiserv Forum, and the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, located along the Milwaukee River, host local and nationally touring concerts, plays, and musicals. Some of downtown's smaller venues include Shank Hall and Turner Hall, which is housed in a National Historic Building. Together, these spaces provide amenities for downtown residents and draw visitors from around the city, region and beyond.

Recognizing the opportunity of the city's performing arts industry, in 2022, VISIT Milwaukee, in partnership with Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, launched a concentrated marketing effort branding the cluster of theaters in the historic heart of downtown as the Milwaukee Theater District.¹¹

With 15,000 theater seats downtown, the district ranks number one in the United States for the highest number of theater seats per capita. With a combined 2,100 annual performances attracting 2 million attendees each year, it is a core part of Milwaukee’s larger entertainment industry, which generates an estimated \$400 million in visitor spending annually, according to Tourism Economics. As part of that impact, Milwaukee Theater District venues employ more than 1,000 people and even more volunteers.

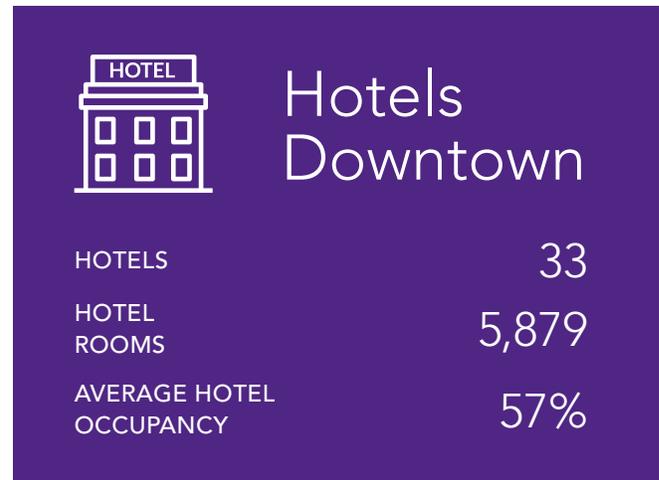
Downtown Milwaukee’s role as a convention magnet brings many visitors downtown, too. These visitors patronize the area’s restaurants and shops and contribute to an active streetscape. By 2024, the Baird Center plans to open an expansion which will further increase the size of the convention center and increase Milwaukee’s appeal as a convention destination. As of 2023, downtown was home to 33 hotels totaling approximately 5,900 rooms. This represents a staggering 113% increase since 2010. With almost 200 rooms proposed or under construction downtown, translating to an additional 5% increase in rooms, the growth of the hospitality industry in downtown Milwaukee does not appear to be slowing. There are signs this has contributed to job growth downtown, too; between 2010 and 2019, employment in the accommodations and food services sector increased by 15%. While the COVID-19 pandemic had a serious effect on business travel not only in Milwaukee, but globally, downtown Milwaukee’s visitation is well on its way to a full recovery. In 2022, average hotel occupancy was 57%, not far below the average occupancy rate of 66% in the 2010s.



Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Visit Milwaukee (2022)

	Downtown Milwaukee	Established Downtowns	Study Average
HOTELS	33	26	21
HOTEL ROOMS	5,879	6,046	4,661

Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 (2023)



Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Visit Milwaukee (2023)

Identity | Visitation, Heritage, Tradition

Downtowns and center cities preserve the heritage of a place, provide a common point of physical connection for regional residents, and contribute positively to the brand of the regions they anchor.

Downtowns are “iconic and powerful symbols for a city and often contain the most iconic landmarks, distinctive features, and unique neighborhoods. Given that most downtowns represent one of the oldest neighborhoods citywide, they offer rare insights into their city’s past, present, and future.”¹² The authentic cultural offerings in downtown enhance its character, heritage, and beauty, and create a unique sense of place not easily replicated in other parts of the city.

Benefits of Identity: Brand, Visitation, Heritage, Tradition, Memory, Celebration, Fun, Utilization, Culture



On July 20, 2021, Milwaukee’s adopted son Giannis Antetokounmpo scored an astounding 50 points to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to their first NBA Championship title in as many years. It all happened at Fiserv Forum, which is fittingly located in a downtown whose legacy — much like the team’s — has been defined by extraordinary growth and transformation over the past half-century.

Today’s downtown is as much about honoring the past as it is looking ahead to the future. Modern amenities like the Milwaukee Riverwalk, which consistently ranks among the top ten riverwalks in the United States, are a must-see for locals and visitors alike that also harkens back to the city’s earliest years as an industrial river town. Major gatherings like Harley-Davidson Homecoming attract motorcycle enthusiasts from around the world for a weekend’s worth of entertainment, celebrating a brand so synonymous with its hometown that the event generates nearly \$100 million in annual economic impact back to local businesses and hotel operators. And it’s impossible to think of Milwaukee in the summer without mentioning Summerfest, which bills itself as the world’s largest music festival. Taking place near the historic Frederick Law Olmsted-designed Lake Park, the festival saw a 40% surge in attendance in 2023, drawing close to 625,000 attendees.

Beyond sports and music, downtown Milwaukee’s streets and public spaces play host to a massive, open-air art gallery featuring works from renowned local and international artists. Sculpture Milwaukee — a unique, museum-quality public art installation — stretches five miles long, winding its way through downtown Milwaukee, the Historic Third Ward, and beyond. Downtown is also adorned with some of the city’s largest murals, including one celebrating Antetokounmpo himself, and the IDA Excellence Award-winning Brighten the Passage, which includes large-scale murals and dynamic lighting on the I-794 freeway support piers defining the southern boundary of the central business district and

strengthening the connection with the Historic Third Ward. In Milwaukee — a national leader when it comes to adaptive reuse of historic or obsolete commercial buildings — the downtown architecture itself becomes a work of art. The transformation of popular attractions like the Mackie and Mitchell buildings, Plankinton Arcade, along with historic structures of the Pabst Brewing Company, now known as the Brewery District, make up some of the more than 1.5 million square feet of space that has been converted for new housing and hotels since 2015.

Exciting new additions are on the horizon as well. Vel R. Phillips Plaza, a new public space, is slated for completion by 2024, just in time for the city to host the 2024 Republican National Convention. In a move meant to enhance urban livability, downtown is also set to open its first off-leash dog park in 2024, recognizing that nearly half of all

downtown households own at least one dog. The park has even attracted adjacent development from the pet-friendly Foxtown Brewing to form what is being coined as downtown's Dog District, a social hub for people and their pets to co-mingle.

With such diverse offerings, downtown Milwaukee presents itself as a place where the arts, nature, and community coalesce, catering to a wide variety of interests and lifestyles. Aiming to build upon its unprecedented momentum, the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 released *Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040*, a brand-new comprehensive plan for downtown. After a nearly two-year planning process, the plan was officially adopted by Milwaukee's Common Council on July 31, 2023 as a roadmap that will shape the next two decades of development, policies, and programs that enable a more walkable, vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and resilient downtown.

Destinations & Unique Features



69

HISTORIC
STRUCTURES
LOCAL



8

HISTORIC
STRUCTURES
NATIONAL



120

PUBLIC ART
INSTALLATIONS



16

PARKS AND
NATURAL AREAS

Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, National Register of Historic Places (2022)



Social Media

FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS

53,000+

INSTAGRAM
FOLLOWERS

37,900+

TWITTER
FOLLOWERS

59,000+

TIKTOK
FOLLOWERS

1,000+

LINKEDIN
FOLLOWERS

900+

Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 (2023)

Resilience | Sustainability, Diversity

At its broadest, resilience means a place's ability to withstand shocks and stresses. Thanks to their diversity and density of resources and services, center cities and their residents can better absorb economic, social, and environmental shocks and stresses than other parts of a city. Diversity and economic vitality equip downtowns and center cities to adapt to economic and social shocks better than more homogenous communities. Similarly, density better positions downtowns and center cities to make investments needed to hedge against and bounce back from increasingly frequent environmental shocks and stresses.

Benefits of Resilience: Health, Equity, Sustainability, Accessibility, Mobility, Durability of Services, Density, Diversity, Affordability, Civic Participation, Opportunity, Scale, Infrastructure

Economic Resilience

Economic resilience is the ability of a downtown to withstand adverse economic conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by having a mix of factors essential to continual long-term success. Bringing together a mix of industries with a talented workforce makes downtown both a competitive and economically resilient environment.

Downtown Milwaukee is no stranger to the challenges posed by national economic upheaval, and its historical resilience and current momentum provides insights into its optimistic future. Notably, during the Great Recession, downtown demonstrated impressive stability, particularly considering its sizable job concentration in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector. From 2008 to 2009, downtown primary employment saw a year-over-year decrease of 2.2%. However, it regained momentum quickly, recording 1.8% year-over-year growth from 2009 to 2010. By contrast, the decline in citywide employment was far more dramatic, plummeting by 8% from 2008 to 2009 and declining by another 2% from 2009 to 2010. Although data is only available through 2020, a recent study by the University of Toronto analyzing mobile phone data paints a promising picture: as of spring 2023, downtown Milwaukee's activity



level had recovered to 78% of 2019 levels, which was the second highest of all the Midwestern peer cities and 16th of all of the cities included in the study, placing Milwaukee in the top 20th percentile for recovery.¹³

With regard to its residential demographics, downtown has a marginally smaller proportion of people living at or near the poverty line compared to the city as a whole. While almost a quarter of Milwaukee's population, or 24%, falls within this category, the rate is slightly less in downtown at 20%. However, both percentages are greater than the regional figure, where only 12%, or roughly 1 in 8 households, live in poverty.

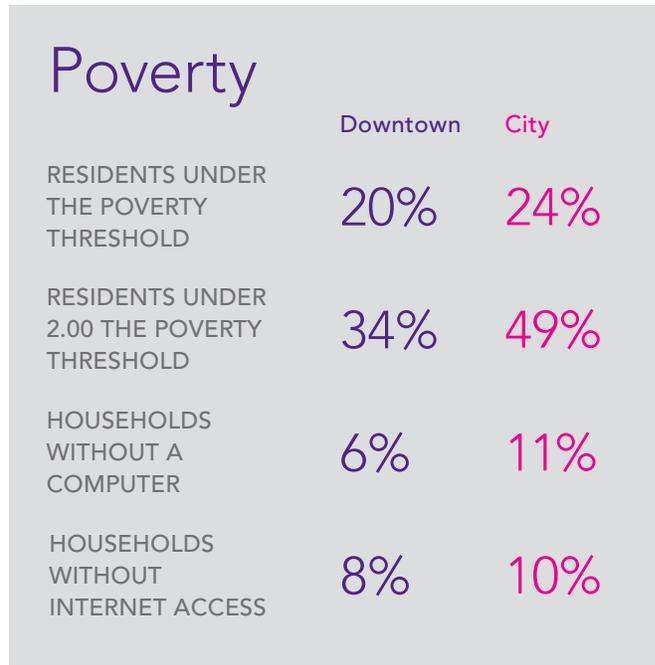
Overall, the outlook for both downtown workers and residents seems more positive than their city-wide counterparts, lending downtown an additional degree of resilience to economic disruption. This resilience to shocks demonstrates a fundamental strength of downtown: that it is a place where both businesses and people thrive, and that success provides a bedrock of support for the entire city and region.

Social Resilience

Downtowns act as hubs for social resilience. Their dense nature gives a diverse mix of residents and employees access to a multitude of community resources in a small area. With access to 16 parks and natural areas, 21 recreation and community centers, 22 religious institutions, and three libraries, downtown Milwaukee boasts an impressive collection of community resources. Together, these community resources create space for downtown residents, employees, and visitors to meet, learn, and participate in civic life in multiple places.

Milwaukee’s downtown benefits from its immediate proximity to one of its most important assets — Lake Michigan. Over many generations, city leaders have prioritized the incorporation of open space both within — and adjacent to — downtown. Along the lake, Veterans and Lake parks, Bradford Beach — along with the Summerfest grounds — command a significant presence, effectively serving as downtown’s front porch. Once inside its boundaries, Red Arrow, Pere Marquette, Zeidler Union Square and Cathedral Square parks, which have historically served as gathering places for Milwaukeeans and residents alike, have been further enhanced by the BID’s own placemaking efforts. In the past year, large-scale public art installations like *Evanescent* by Sydney-based design practice Atelier Sisu and *Lightfield* by visual artist HYBYCOZO have attracted thousands of people to downtown parks. In an era of social media, the reach of these playful exhibitions extends far beyond the physical realm, inviting people from Milwaukee and beyond to reimagine downtown as an active place for recreation and joy.

Parks and public spaces combine with other factors to contribute to the health and well-being of downtown residents, who tend to lead healthier lifestyles than those living in cities or rural areas. This is true in downtown Milwaukee,



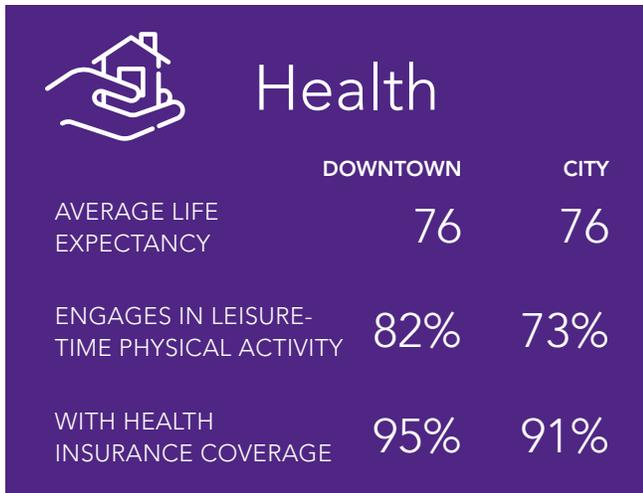
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2021)

where the share of people who participate in no leisure-time physical activity is lower than it is in the city. Furthermore, just 5% of downtown residents lack health insurance, compared to 9% of those living in the city. This statistic aligns with the marginally smaller percentage of people living in poverty in the downtown area: 20% of downtown residents, compared to 24% of city residents, meet the definition of poverty. Despite these advantages, health outcomes for residents living downtown are about on par with the city, with life expectancy for both being 76 years.

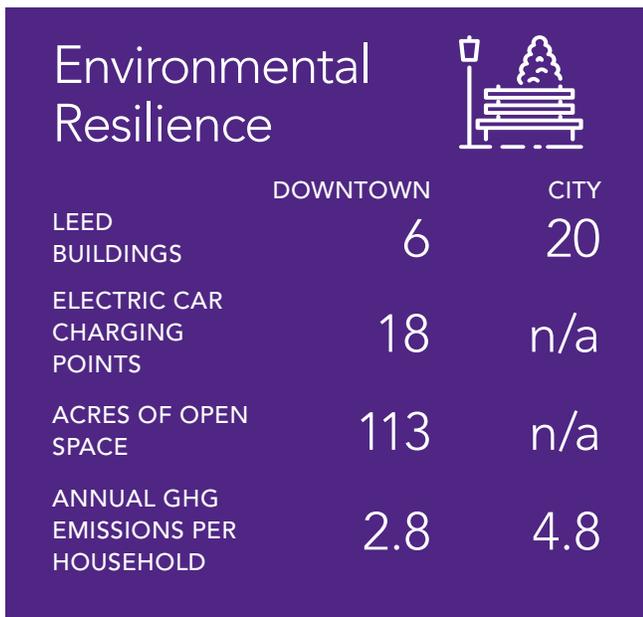
As more work, schooling, entertainment, and other daily activities move online — a trend that persists in our post-



Source: Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 (2023)



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2020); CDC (2017); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology (2017), City of Milwaukee, USGBC (2023)

pandemic world — access to a suitable computer, phone, or tablet and reliable internet service have grown increasingly important. Against this backdrop, 92% of downtown households have access to the internet at home, similar to the 90% of city households with internet access. Additionally, 94% of downtown households have a computer, higher than the 89% of city households with a computer. This high level of digital connectivity provides the downtown community with a high degree of resilience in times of crisis or emergency.

Environmental Resilience

A downtown's environmental resilience plays a major role in assuring long-term sustainability in its region. Residents of downtown Milwaukee live a much more sustainable lifestyle than the typical Milwaukeean. Downtown households account for 2.8 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year according to research by the Center for Neighborhood Technology. This is almost half of the amount of a typical Milwaukee household's emissions of 4.8 tons, and 60% less than the typical regional household's emissions of 7 tons. Furthermore, despite comprising roughly 3% of the city's land area, downtown is home to roughly one-third of its LEED-certified buildings.

The locational efficiency of downtown allows residents downtown to make different, more environmentally- and health-conscious decisions about their commute. 19% — or almost 1-in-5 downtown residents — choose to walk to work as their main means of commuting, a share that is roughly five times the rate of citywide residents, who may often live further from work or in less pedestrian-friendly environments. This has led to a Walk Score of 99 in downtown Milwaukee, which is higher than the average for *established* downtowns and significantly higher than the average for the city of Milwaukee. Because of its high level of walkability, 32% of downtown residents choose an environmentally friendly commute compared to just 23% of city commuters and 14% of the region's total commuters.

Overall, commute mode share has changed little in the last 10 years, although new projects with lower on-site parking ratios may provide a catalyst for more sustainable commuting by downtown residents. While biking still only accounts for a small share of downtown commuters, improvements are being made downtown to expand this choice. For example, Bublr, Milwaukee’s bike share program, opened in 2014 with just 10 docking stations. However, as of 2023, the network expanded to include 30 stations and approximately 200 bikes located downtown. Additionally, there are 12 miles of bike lanes in the study area with more protected bike lanes planned for Van Buren, Kilbourn, and Michigan Streets in the near future — an impressive number given the relatively small size of downtown.

New Mobility Options

Downtown

BIKESHARE STATIONS	30
TOTAL DOCKED OR DOCKLESS BIKES	197
TOTAL TRANSIT STOPS INCLUDING RAIL AND BUS	214

Source: Bublr, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 (2023)

SUSTAINABLE COMMUTE



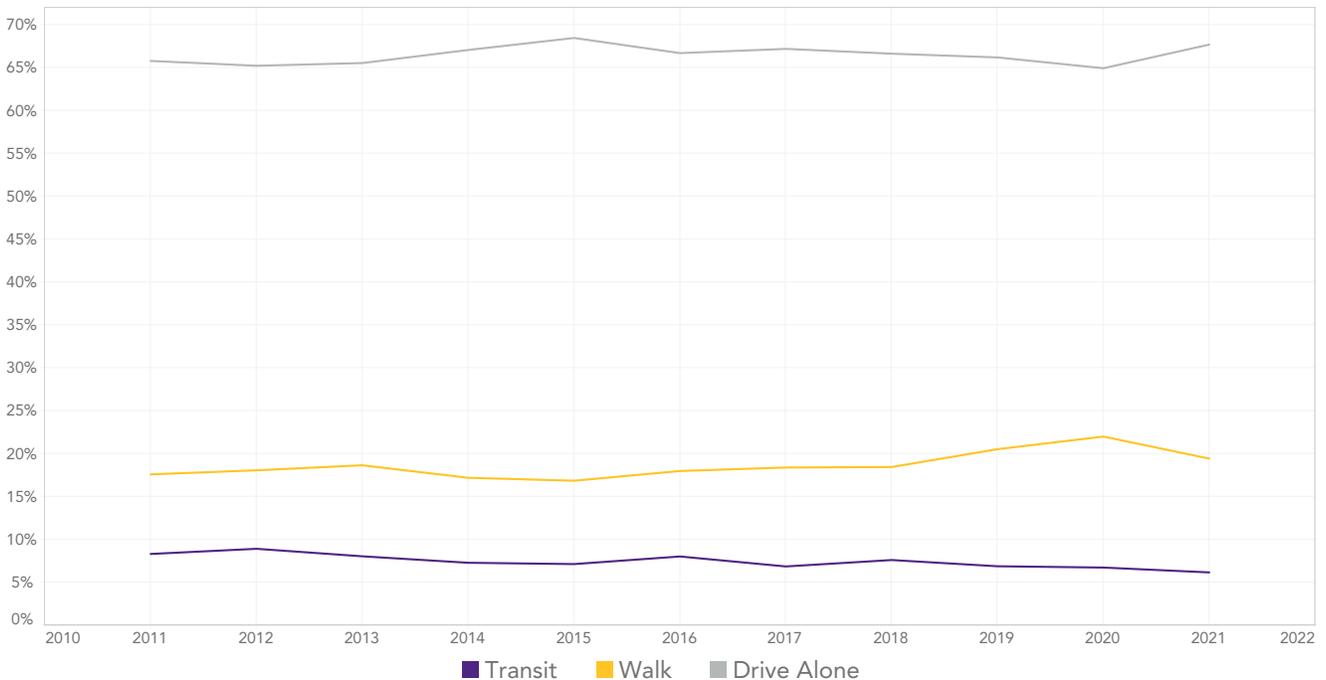
DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE
32%

ESTABLISHED DOWNTOWNS
38%

MILWAUKEE CITY
23%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)

Downtown Commute Mode Share



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Downtown Commuting Patterns

TOTAL COMMUTING RESIDENTS 16 AND OVER NOT WORKING FROM HOME

	Downtown	City	Region
	14K	240K	926K

BIKE

	Downtown	City	Region
	1%	1%	0%

TRANSIT

	Downtown	City	Region
	6%	7%	3%

CARPPOOL

	Downtown	City	Region
	5%	10%	8%

WALK

	Downtown	City	Region
	19%	4%	2%

DRIVE ALONE

	Downtown	City	Region
	68%	77%	86%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (2017–2021)



Mobility Scores

Downtown Milwaukee | Established Downtowns | Established Cities

WALK

	99	94	65
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BIKE

	85	78	63
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TRANSIT

	72	76	44
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Source: Walk Score (2023)

Downtown Profile | Summary

The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities study categorizes American districts into three development stages: *established*, *growing*, and *emerging*. These tiers are determined by various metrics, including population and job density, growth rate, and assessed land value per square mile. As a result of its high density and significant citywide contributions in jobs, population, and land value, Milwaukee ranks in the *established* tier.

Within the region, there is no larger employment center than downtown Milwaukee, which is home to 80,300 primary jobs and 84,900 total jobs including a significant portion of the city's and region's jobs in the finance and insurance, public administration, and professional, technical, and scientific services sectors. Comprising just under 3% of the city's land area, downtown concentrates 31% of the city's jobs — an impressive number, but a slightly smaller share than other *established* downtowns. Still, while other downtowns struggle to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, downtown is on track to welcome continued employment growth thanks to the addition of jobs from some of the region's largest employers, including Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee Tool and Fiserv. Data indicate that the downtown area has been recovering more quickly than other parts of the city.

Downtown is also a fast-growing residential neighborhood, whose population increased by 35% between 2000 and 2021. While significant, it's happening at a slower pace than the residential growth of other *established* downtowns, which grew by 55% within the same period. However, there's important local context to consider: Downtown's ongoing growth is bucking a trend happening across the city where surrounding areas have seen population declines over the last two decades. Additionally, the downtown Milwaukee study area contains sizeable pockets of desirable, well-established neighborhoods, some in locally and nationally designated historic districts, which can limit growth and development potential. In another encouraging sign for downtown, it's becoming more diverse, welcoming significant growth in the populations of Hispanic and Latino residents, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and those who identify as two or more races. Strong demand downtown is fueling continued residential development, and with 2,000 apartment units currently under construction and more than 5,000 planned units in the

Established Downtowns

BALTIMORE	MINNEAPOLIS	SAINT PAUL
FORT LAUDERDALE	NEW HAVEN	SAN FRANCISCO
MIAMI	PITTSBURGH	SEATTLE
MILWAUKEE	RICHMOND	WEST PALM BEACH



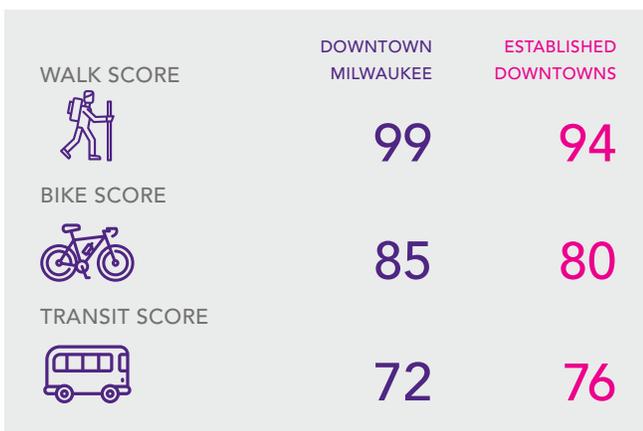
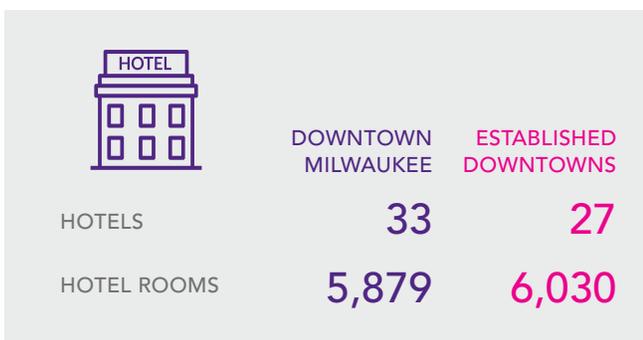
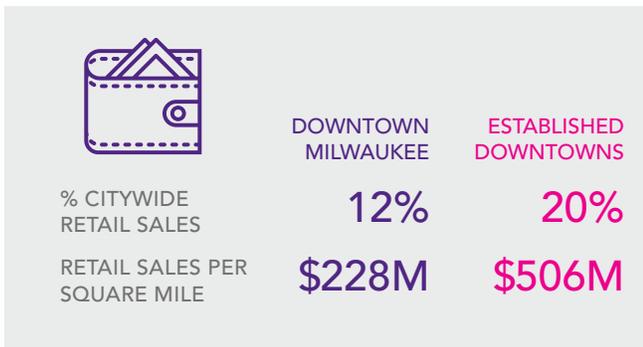
RESIDENTS

	DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE	ESTABLISHED DOWNTOWNS	ESTABLISHED CITIES
GROWTH AVG. 2000–2021	35%	55%	12%
DENSITY RESIDENTS / ACRE	17	20.3	11.8
MEDIAN INCOME HOUSEHOLD	\$58K	\$72K	\$67K
DIVERSITY INDEX	55.6	68.6	73.5



EMPLOYMENT

	DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE	ESTABLISHED DOWNTOWNS
CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT (2002–2020)	6%	10%
CITYWIDE JOBS	31%	41%
CITYWIDE KNOWLEDGE JOBS	38%	47%
CITYWIDE CREATIVE JOBS	29%	44%
RESIDENTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	59%	58%



pipeline, facilitating a continued pace of population growth downtown in the coming years.

The continued growth of downtown will be aided by its position as a major cultural and entertainment hub. Boasting 13 theaters and four other live entertainment venues that draw both local and regional visitors, the Milwaukee Theater District holds the highest number of theater seats per capita in the U.S, attracting 2 million attendees and generating an estimated \$400 million in visitor spending through 2,100 annual performances. Additionally, downtown Milwaukee is a growing convention destination, evidenced by a 113% increase in hotel rooms since 2010, which is estimated to reach nearly 6,000 rooms in 2023. Home to a total of 33 hotels, downtown boasts more places for visitors to stay than the average *established* downtown and a much higher hotel count than the average for IDA's study, which sits at 21. While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted business travel, the area is recovering, with hotel occupancy rates nearing pre-pandemic levels.

Downtown Milwaukee exemplifies resilience across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, making it well-equipped to absorb future shocks and stresses. Its diverse mix of community resources, including parks, community centers, and religious institutions, bolsters social resilience, while its high levels of digital connectivity provide added stability in times of crisis. Proximity to Lake Michigan and a focus on open spaces have contributed to downtown residents' health and well-being, with life expectancies matching the average for *established* downtowns. Environmentally, downtown households emit significantly fewer greenhouse gases compared to other areas within the city, and a large number of LEED-certified buildings underscore its sustainability. High walkability and growing bike infrastructure further enhance its environmental resilience, with downtown Milwaukee's Walk and Bike scores exceeding the averages for *established* downtowns.

Considering these many advantages, downtown Milwaukee is poised for continued success in future years as a downtown which has entered the *established* tier but continues to show a strong growth trajectory.



APPENDICES

PROJECT
METHODOLOGY

PRINCIPLES AND
BENEFITS

DATA SOURCES

SELECTED
STUDY
DEFINITIONS

ADDITIONAL
IDA SOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Appendix I: Project Framework and Methodology



BACKGROUND

In 2017, IDA launched the *Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* study. IDA staff and the IDA Research Committee worked with the initial group of 13 downtown organizations, Stantec's Urban Places as a project advisor, and HR&A as an external consultant to develop the valuation methodology and metrics. Since 2017, IDA has added over 40 more downtowns or urban districts to the study database, and worked with their respective urban place management organizations (UPMOs) to collect local data, obtain data from agencies in their cities, and combine these metrics with publicly available statistics on demographics, economy, and housing. Data collected included publicly available census figures (population, demographics, employment, transportation), downtown economic performance, municipal finances, capital projects, GIS data, and the local qualitative context. The 49 total downtowns and urban districts studied to date represent diverse geographic regions and have relatively comparable levels of complexity and relationships to their respective cities and regions.

Guiding questions for this project included:

- What is the economic case for downtowns? What stands out about land values, taxes, or city investments?
- How do downtowns strengthen their regions?
- Can we standardize metrics to calculate the value of a downtown?
- How can downtowns measure their authentic, cultural and historical heritage?
- How does the diversity of a downtown make it inclusive, inviting, and accessible for all?
- What inherent characteristics of downtown make it an anchor of the city and region?
- Due to its mix of land-uses, diversity of jobs, and density, is downtown more socially, economically, and environmentally resilient than the rest of the city and region?

PROJECT PURPOSE

The project measured the performance of U.S. downtowns using metrics developed collaboratively and organized under five principles that contribute to a valuable urban center. This study:

- Provides a framework of principles and metrics to guide data collection for evaluating the value of downtowns and center cities.
- Standardizes key metrics for evaluating the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of American downtowns.
- Develops an industry-wide model for calculating the economic value of downtowns, creating a replicable methodology for continued data collection.
- Provides individual analysis and performance benchmarks for participating downtowns in this standardized framework, including supplemental qualitative analysis.
- Empowers and continues to support IDA members' economic and community development efforts through comparative analysis.



KNOWN LIMITS TO THIS PROJECT

While this study aims to provide a comprehensive quantification of the value of downtowns, there are still several limitations to our approach. Not all local sources consistently collect the same data, or collect it in the same way, which hinders our ability to make comparisons between downtowns. In some cases, the data we ask for simply does not exist or has not been collected on the relatively small scale of census tracts or downtown sub-area. This makes it challenging to rely on local data for analysis and can result in some missing pieces in our narrative. Our most recent data also comes predominantly from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2020 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) On the Map tool, and ESRI Business Analyst. Due to the lag in data availability,

some metrics may not align with more recent data from local downtown, municipal, or proprietary sources. This will be especially true in coming years as the recovery in employment following the COVID-19 pandemic will not be observed in our data sources for a few years.

Finally, citywide context plays a large role in the analysis. Significant variance in overall city size (from Spartanburg's 20 square miles to Oklahoma City's 606) can skew comparisons of the proportion of citywide jobs or population in different districts. However, since downtowns operate within the context of their city, understanding the proportion of jobs, residents, and other metrics as a percentage of their cities still provides an important perspective on a downtown's contribution to its city and region.



Discussion: What factors make a vibrant downtown?

Downtowns have differing strengths: some function as employment anchors, some as tourist hubs, and some as neighborhood centers. Some are all three. We distilled the factors for measuring the value from attributes common to all downtowns regardless of their specific characteristics. These included fun, diversity, density, creativity, size, economic output, mobility, brand, investment, resiliency, health, sustainability, affordability, fiscal impact and accessibility.



DETERMINING PRINCIPLES FOR A VALUABLE DOWNTOWN

This project began with a Principles and Metrics Workshop held in 2017 with representatives of UPMOs from the 13 pilot downtowns. The workshop focused on developing value principles that collectively capture a downtown's multiple functions and qualities, and its contributions to the city and region. Through this discussion, the participants grouped the value principles into five categories, which provided the basis for determining benchmarking metrics.

Downtown advocates tailor their arguments to the interests of different audiences. For instance, within the economy argument, the figure for sales tax revenue generated downtown would have resonance for government officials but likely wouldn't hold much interest for visitors and workers. For these audiences, a UPMO might assemble data showing the types of retail available downtown, whether the offerings meet user needs, and how fully residents, workers, and visitors use these retail establishments. The study team sought arguments that would appeal to multiple audiences and worked to identify metrics that could support multiple value statements. The workshop identified these value statements:



1. Downtowns are typically the economic engines of their regions due to a density of jobs, suppliers, customers, professional clusters, goods, and services.
2. Downtowns offer convenient access to outlying markets of residents, customers, suppliers, and peers thanks to past and ongoing investment in transportation infrastructure.
3. Downtowns provide a concentration of culture, recreation, and entertainment.
4. Downtowns offer choices for people with different levels of disposable income and lifestyle preferences.
5. Because of their density and diversity, downtowns encourage agglomeration, collaboration, and innovation.
6. Downtowns are central to the brand of the cities and regions they anchor.
7. Downtowns can be more economically and socially resilient than their broader regions.
8. Downtown resources and urban form support healthy lifestyles.
9. Downtowns' density translates into relatively low per-capita rates of natural resource consumption.
10. Relatively high rates of fiscal revenue generation and efficient consumption of public resources mean that downtowns yield a high return on public investment.

METRICS SELECTION

To meet the goal of providing metrics that allow comparisons across jurisdictions, we made sure necessary comparison data was available for every (or almost every) downtown, city, and region. Data would ideally be:

1. **Readily available** to most downtown management organizations (and ideally public).
2. **Replicable** (enabling year-to-year comparisons), and
3. **Scalable across jurisdictions**, allowing for benchmarking and regional comparisons.

Specifically, we were reliably able to obtain metrics like population, employment, or assessed value – less reliably obtaining downtown visitors, hotel tax revenue. For this reason, our comparisons across jurisdictions focus on those more commonly available metrics.

We expect most downtowns to rely on similar sources of proprietary data, but participating downtowns may prefer one choice over another when obtaining similar data on metrics like commercial real estate (e.g. Colliers vs CBRE). To the extent possible, instructions provide that data sources remain consistent across geographic scales (downtown, city, region) and consistent over time for longitudinal analysis.

Metrics and comparisons are analyzed to develop value statements of the downtown or district. Three types of data fully illustrate each argument:

1. **Absolute facts** provide quantitative context and a feel for the scale of the characteristic being used to make the argument.

For example, under economy, a UPMO might want to make the argument that a thriving financial services sector plays a critical role in the city's economy. The number of financial services jobs, the share of the city's financial services jobs located downtown, and number/list of large financial services companies headquartered downtown will help make the case that downtown has great importance to that sector and therefore the city.

2. **Indicators** measure an argument at a secondary level by focusing on inputs or outputs and may reflect the subject geography or serve as benchmarks for comparison to peer downtowns or case studies of best practices.



At this level, a UPMO could argue that their financial services sector is healthy and thriving. Comparisons to the growth of this industry sector in other downtowns, or concentration of financial services jobs relative to other downtowns would highlight the strength of their downtown's appeal to the financial services sector.

3. **Qualitative assessments** inject anecdotal context and color into an argument.

For this level, the UPMO could include news reports of new financial services companies choosing to place offices downtown. An interview with a company executive on why they chose to locate downtown would also be a powerful anecdote on downtown's appeal.

Together, these different types of information allow IDA and the UPMO to communicate downtown's unique value to the city.



DEFINING DOWNTOWN

This study developed a definition of the commercial downtown that moved beyond the boundaries of a development authority or a business improvement district. For one thing, geographic parameters vary across data sources and may not align with a UPMO's jurisdiction.

Urban place management organizations vary widely in terms of their geographic definition. To make boundaries replicable and comparable across data sources, the study team recommended aligning each downtown with commonly used census boundaries. In most cases this meant using census tracts, the smallest permanent subdivisions that receive annual data updates under the American Community Survey. They make ideal geographic identifiers, since new data is released regularly, and tract boundaries are only adjusted once every 10 years.

Employing census tracts may not accurately reflect the value of every downtown. In some cases, census block groups more accurately captured the downtown boundaries. Though the Census Bureau subdivide or combine block groups with each decennial census, block groups also receive annual data updates and are compatible with most data sources. We looked to the 2012 publication, *The Value of Canadian Downtowns*, for effective criteria:

1. The downtown boundary had to include the city's financial core.
2. The downtown study area had to include diverse urban elements and land uses.
3. Where possible, we sought hard boundaries such as major streets, train tracks, or geographic features like rivers.
4. An overarching consideration was that data compiled align with selected downtown study areas.

Each downtown provided IDA with the geography selection for its downtown, which IDA then worked to refine, given local conditions and UPMO needs. Customized shapefiles or census tracts defined the downtown boundaries. For city and regional boundaries, IDA worked with the downtown management organization to confirm the accuracy of the respective census-designated place or MSA.

PROJECT PROCESS

DATA COLLECTION

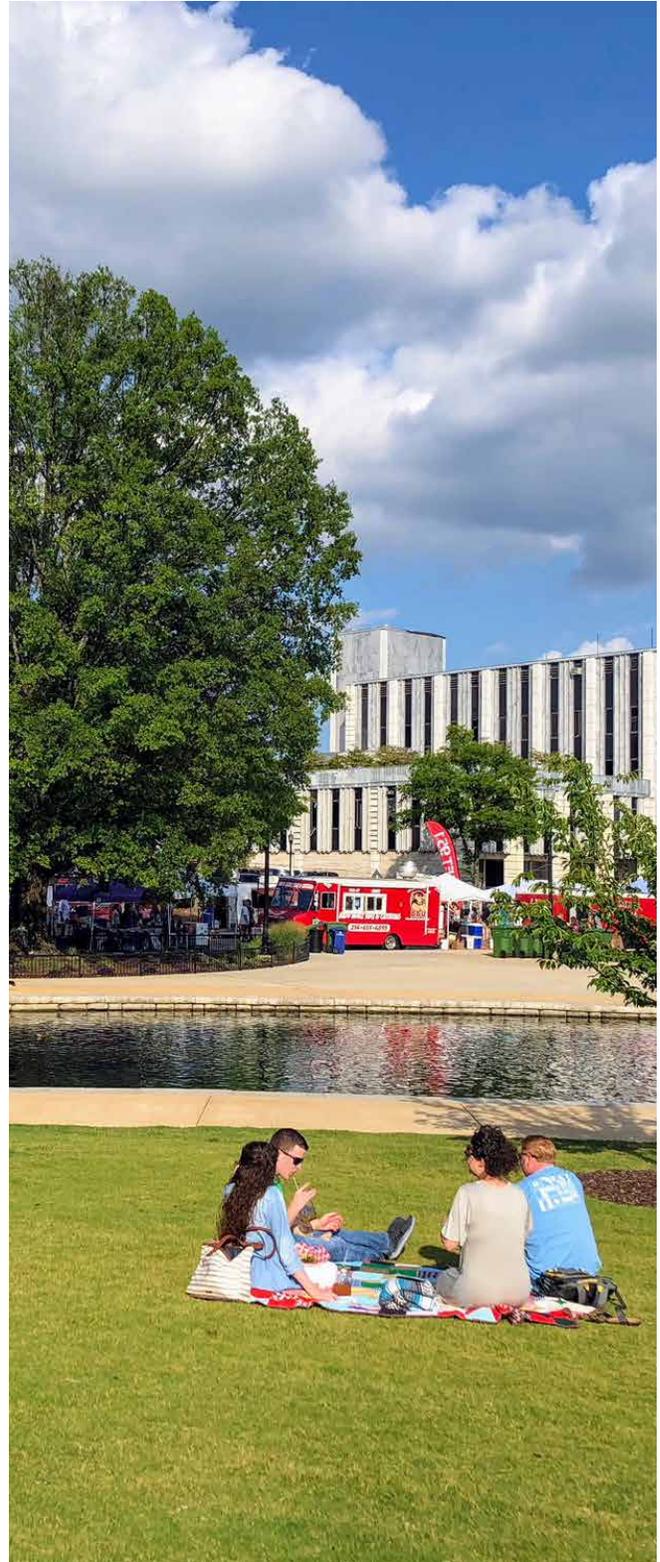
Both IDA and the local partner spend the first phase of the project collecting data for the study. IDA collects data primarily from national databases (see Appendix 3 for data sources), and the local partner works with its data partners to obtain other locally-specific data. In instances where local data was not available, we allowed substitution or approximation for some metrics if clearly noted and explained.

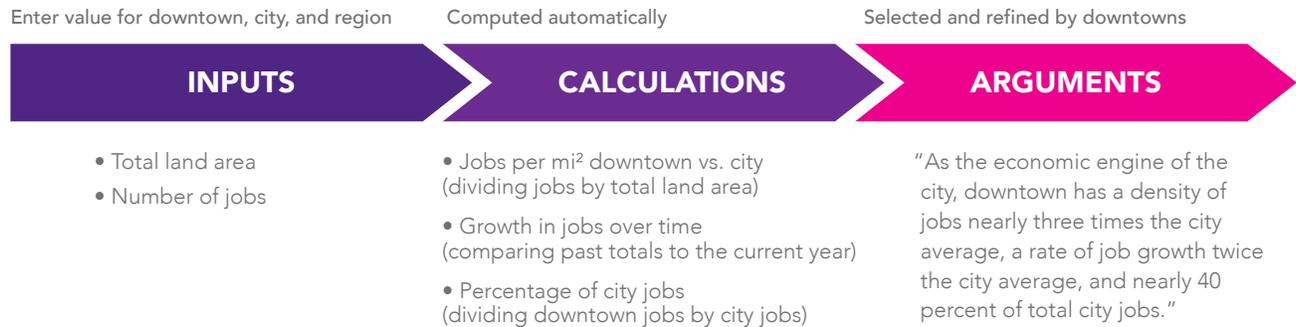
CALCULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

After compiling the data, all the information is entered into an IDA database for analysis. Data is organized by metric, year, and geography for each district. This specialized tool also tabulates numerous ratios, percentages, changes, and comparisons used to inform the report. As an example, after plugging in employment and land area data the tool can calculate the following:

- Percent of citywide and regional jobs
- Percent of citywide and regional land area
- Percent total job growth between specified years
- Percent job growth between specified years broken out by industry
- Average jobs per square mile
- Percent of employment in knowledge industries
- Percent of citywide and regional knowledge jobs located downtown
- Share of employment by race
- Share of employment by age
- Share of workers living and working within the selected area

This analysis is applied across all years collected and all applicable geographies to inform trends over time and within larger contexts. The flow chart of inputs, calculations, and arguments demonstrates how we go from raw data to making arguments in the report. Research staff also use their expertise and knowledge of downtowns to highlight key trends and draw connections between local insights and the trends in the data.





BENCHMARKING TIERS

Based on the data collected for this study, we identified three tiers of downtowns, defined by stage of development. We divided the 49 downtowns that have participated to date into “established”, “growing” and “emerging” tiers. Downtown figures were compared to study-wide medians on three themes:

- Density
 - o Jobs per square mile
 - o Residents per square mile
 - o Assessed value per square mile
- Significance to city
 - o Percentage of citywide jobs
 - o Percentage of citywide residents
- Long-term growth
 - o Percent growth in jobs (2002–2020)
 - o Percent growth in population (2000–2021)

Established – These downtowns have high proportions of their cities’ jobs and residents, are dense and highly valuable to their cities.

Growing – These downtowns have not yet hit a critical level of density and citywide significance but are showing progress towards that critical mass. This group includes both larger downtowns with lower growth rates, and smaller downtowns with exceptional growth rates.

Emerging – These downtowns are a mixture of different sizes and growth rates, and are generally lower-density downtowns that have a low proportion of citywide significance on jobs and residents. Because growth rates are examined 2000 to current, many downtowns that struggled during the recession had a harder time demonstrating significant growth over the longer term despite encouraging growth in recent years.

The compendium report *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities: Third Edition* has additional data on the performance of *emerging*, *growing*, and *established* tiers of downtowns.

Appendix II: Principles and Benefits

ECONOMY: Within their regions, downtowns have substantial economic importance.

Downtowns and center cities are valuable due to their roles as economic anchors for their regions. As traditional centers of commerce, transportation, education, and government, downtowns and center cities frequently serve as hubs of industry and revenue generators despite only making up a small fraction of the land area. Downtowns support high percentages of jobs across many different industries and skill levels. Because of their relatively high density of economic activity, investment in the center city provides a greater return per dollar for both public and private sectors.



Illustrative metrics collected for comparison:

- Annual private investment
- Annual public investment
- Assessed value
- Average office vacancy rate
- Average Class A office rent
- Average Class B office rent
- Average Class C office rent
- Employment (primary jobs)
 - By two-digit NAICS employment sectors
 - By earnings
 - By residence
 - By demographics
- Hotel tax
- Income tax
- Incubator and co-working spaces
- Invested in construction projects
- Number of approved building permits
- Number of Fortune 1000 headquarters
- Office inventory
- Office space under construction
- Office square footage in pipeline (to be completed in three years)
- Property tax
- Parking tax
- Sales tax

INCLUSION: Downtowns invite and welcome all residents of the region (as well as visitors from elsewhere) by providing access to opportunity, essential services, culture, recreation, entertainment, and participation in civic activities.

As the literal and figurative heart of the city, downtowns welcome residents, employees, and visitors from all walks of life. Residents of strong downtowns often come from a wide range of racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, across all ages. This diversity ensures that as an inclusive place, it has a broad appeal to all users and a strong social fabric. Downtowns provide access to all to opportunity, essential services, culture, recreation, entertainment and civic activities.



Illustrative metrics collected for comparison:

- Average residential vacancy rate
- Demographics
- Diversity Index
- Employment diversity
- Foreign-born residents
- Homeless residents
- House value for owner-occupied housing units
- Households by income
- Median gross rent
- Median home price
- Median household income
- Rent-burdened residents
- Resident population
- Resident population by age
- Resident population by highest educational attainment
- Resident population by race and ethnicity
- Residential inventory
- Residential units in pipeline
- Residential units under construction
- Subsidized housing units
- Zillow median rental listing price by number of bedrooms
- Zillow median rental listing price per square foot by number of bedrooms

VIBRANCY: Thanks to a wide base of users, downtowns and center cities can support a variety of retail, infrastructure, and institutional uses that offer broad benefits to the region.

The ability of vibrant places to attract visitors and new residents, as well as a regionwide consumer base creates value. Vibrancy is the buzz of activity and excitement that comes with high-quality experiential offerings like breweries, restaurants, theatres, or outdoor events. Within a downtown creates an attraction and buzz. As the cultural center of their cities, downtowns typically attract a large share of citywide visitors and are the location of a large share of citywide hotels and hotel rooms. An engaging downtown “creates the critical mass of activity that supports retail and restaurants, brings people together in social settings, makes streets feel safe, and encourages people to live and work downtown because of the extensive amenities.”¹



Illustrative metrics collected for comparison:

- Annual festivals/parades
- Average hotel occupancy rate
- Average retail rent
- Average retail vacancy rate
- Average visitor length of stay
- Convention centers
- Gyms and fitness studios
- Hotel rooms
- Hotels
- Outdoor events permitted by city
- Population
- Retail businesses (retail trade and food & drink)
- Retail Market Potential Index (ESRI MPI)
- Retail sales (retail trade and food & drink)
- Retail space in pipeline
- Retail space inventory
- Retail space under construction
- Theatres
- Venues with live entertainment
- Visitation by origin
- Visitors

IDENTITY: Downtowns preserve the heritage of a place, provide a common point of physical connection for regional residents, and contribute positively to the brand of the regions they represent.

Downtowns and center cities are often iconic symbols of their cities, and this strong sense of place enhances local pride. The authentic cultural offerings in downtown enhance its character, heritage, and beauty, and create an environment that is not easily replicable in other parts of the city. Combining community history and personal memory, a downtown's cultural value plays a central role in preserving and promoting the region's identity. Downtowns and center cities serve as places for regional residents to come together, participate in civic life, and celebrate their region, which in turn promotes tourism and civic society. *Downtown preserves heritage, connects regional residents, and contributes positively to the regional brand.*

Downtowns are "iconic and powerful symbols for a city and often contain the most iconic landmarks, distinctive features, and unique neighborhoods. Given that most downtowns were one of the oldest neighborhoods citywide, they offer rare insights into their city's past, present and future."²



Illustrative metrics collected for comparison:

- Convention attendees
- Conventions
- Farmers markets
- Libraries
- Locally designated historic districts
- Locally designated historic structures
- Media mentions
- Museums
- National Register of Historic Places districts
- National Register of Historic Places structures
- Number of followers on Facebook
- Number of followers on Twitter
- Number of posts with Instagram hashtag
- Parks and natural areas
- Playgrounds
- Plazas/squares/amphitheater or other public outdoor gathering spaces
- Postsecondary institutions
- Postsecondary students
- Primary and secondary schools (public and private)
- Public art installations
- Public pools
- Recreation and community centers, both public and private (e.g., YMCA)
- Religious institutions
- Sports stadiums
- Sports teams

RESILIENCE: Because of their diversity and density of resources and services, downtowns and their inhabitants can better absorb economic, social, and environmental, shocks and stresses.

As key centers of economy and culture, being resilient to city, regional, or even national shocks is highly important for ensuring stability, sustainability, and prosperity. Because of the diversity and density of resources and services, center cities and their inhabitants can better absorb economic, social, and environmental shocks and stresses than their surrounding cities and regions. The diversity and economic strengths of strong downtowns and center cities equip them to adapt to economic and social shocks better than more homogenous communities. Consequently, they can play a key role in advancing regional resilience, particularly in the wake of economic and environmental shocks that disproportionately affect less economically and socially dynamic areas.



Illustrative metrics collected for comparison:

- Acreage of open space
- Annual greenhouse gas emissions per household
- Average life expectancy
- Average property crime rate
- Average violent crime rate
- Bike Score
- Bike share stations
- Community gardens
- Commute mode for workers 16 and over
- Commute time for workers 16 and over
- Docked bikes
- Dockless bikes
- Electric car charging points
- Housing and Transportation Index
- LEED-certified buildings
- Miles of bike lanes
- No leisure-time physical activity among adults aged > 18
- Resident population in poverty
- Scooters
- Solid waste generation
- Transit Score
- Transit stops (including rail and bus)
- Unemployment rate
- Walk Score

Appendix III: Data Sources

NATIONAL DATA SOURCES FOR THE VALUE OF U.S. DOWNTOWNS AND CENTER CITIES

Source	Data Available	Pricing	Geographic Limitations	Most Recent Data Vintage in the Study
ESRI	Demographic, Housing, Detailed Establishments, market potential, and Consumer Spending	Proprietary	None; allows for drawing of custom geographies; selection of sub-geographies down to census tracts	2017 to 2022 by data set (Annual Updates)
Social Explorer	Demographic, Housing, Crime, Health	Proprietary	Allows for selection of sub-geographies down to the census block group level	2021 (Annual Updates)
American FactFinder	Demographic, Housing, Crime, Health, Employment, Economy	Public	Allows for selection of sub-geographies down to the census block group level	2021 (Annual Updates)
LEHD On The Map	Labor: workers and firms	Public	None; allows for drawing of custom geographies; selection of sub-geographies down to census block group level	2020 (Annual Updates)
Center for Neighborhood Technology	Housing affordability, Sustainability, Income	Public	Allows for selection and exporting at as small as the block group level	2019 (Updates Unscheduled)
National Register of Historic Places	Historic structures and districts	Public	None	2022 (Annual Updates)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Life expectancy, physical inactivity and other health data	Public	ZIP Code	2021 (Annual Updates)
FBI Uniform Crime Reporting	Crime Rates	Public	City and Metro	2022 (Annual Updates)
Geolounge	Map of Fortune 1000 companies	Public	None	2018 (Unscheduled Updates)
Zillow	Housing and rental costs	Public	The smallest geographies are arbitrarily designated "neighborhoods" some of which line up with the study areas while others do not or do not exist. In these cases, we got as close as we could with a zip code	April to June Annually (Monthly Updates)

Appendix IV: Selected Study Definitions

Assessed value

Assessed value is the dollar value assigned to a property to measure applicable taxes. This figure is an aggregate for all property within the study area, or for the closest match to the study area for which data is available.

Acreage of open space

This figure is the total acreage of designated public spaces like parks or plazas; it does not include vacant lots.

Census block group

A block group is a statistical division of a census tract, generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people, that is used to present data and control block numbering in the decennial census.

Census tract

A census tract is a small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county or equivalent entity, updated by local participants prior to each decennial census.

Creative jobs

The study uses the NAICS industry sector of Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation to count creative jobs.

Development pipeline

Development pipelines include projects very recently completed, currently under construction, and planned for completion within the next three years.

Diversity Index

The Diversity Index is a measurement of the likelihood that any two randomly selected individuals will be of a different race or ethnicity. The closer the number comes to 100, the more likely the two will be different, indicating diversity.

Employment

The study uses the LEHD on the Map tool to count "primary jobs." Distinct from total jobs, primary jobs count only the highest-wage job when an individual holds multiple jobs at a time. This figure may not accurately reflect less traditional types of employment like gig work or small startups.

Event venue

Event venues include spaces typically used for public events such as conferences, conventions, concerts. This metric is somewhat subjective in that data is collected locally, and the downtown determines what qualifies for inclusion. For example, a downtown might include a venue that is largely private but represents a part of the fabric of the event community.

Farmers markets

The number of farmers markets is a count of both permanent and seasonal farmers markets.

Greenhouse gas emissions

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Index includes an estimate of CO2 emissions per household within a given area.

Housing and Transportation Index

The Housing and Transportation Index, produced by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, measures how much an average household spends on housing and transportation relative to income. This figure demonstrates how urban places often have higher base rents, but much lower transportation costs.

Knowledge jobs

Knowledge jobs consist of jobs in the NAICS industry sectors of Information; Finance and Insurance; Real Estate and Rental and Leasing; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Management of Companies and Enterprises; and Health Care and Social Assistance.

Market Potential Index

ESRI Market Potential Index measures the likelihood of residents in a set area to spend money on specified categories of goods and services, indexed to a national average. Values below 100 indicate a below average demand from residents in the area, and above 100 an above average demand.

Media mentions

This study sometimes utilizes independent sources to add nuance to the data. Forbes' list of top 100 metro areas to start a new business is an example of this type of source. Another example might be a travel blog praising restaurants or entertainment options within the downtown. While not always quantitative sources, these media mentions add color and perspective to the report.

Middle-class

This study defines middle-class as between 67% and 200% of area median income. This range was calculated for each downtown based on the median income of the region.

Millennial

This study defines residents between the ages of 18 and 34 as millennials.

No leisure-time physical activity

Presented as a percentage, no leisure-time physical activity is the share of residents within the geography who have not engaged in physical activity in their spare time within the past month from the time surveyed.

Private investment

Private investment is defined as money from private sources being invested in development. This figure is sometimes replaced by a sum of the largest development projects within the study area.

Public art installations

This figure counts art installations that may be owned by either public or private entities and may be temporary or permanent. They must, however, be easily accessible by the general public.

Public investment

Individual UPMOs may define public capital investment differently, but the figure generally includes municipal,

state, and federal investment in capital projects downtown (such as open space or infrastructure). If only a specific bucket of public investment is available for measurement (for example, municipal public investment), this can be measured and footnoted in the profiles in lieu of capturing investments by other levels of government.

Rent-burdened

Households paying more than 30% of their income to rent are considered rent-burdened.

Retail demand

Retail demand measures the total spending potential of an area's population, as determined by residential population and household income characteristics.³

Retail sales

Retail sales measure total sales by businesses within the observed geography. All estimates of market supply are in nominal terms and are derived from receipts (net of sales taxes, refunds, and returns) of businesses primarily engaged in the sale of merchandise. Excise taxes paid by the retailer or the remuneration of services are also included—for example, installation and delivery charges that are incidental to the transaction.⁴

Sales to non-residents

Sales to non-residents represents an estimate calculated by using figures for retail demand and sales to determine how much of downtown retail sales are to people who don't live in downtown. Simply put, retail sales – resident retail demand = sales to non-residents.

Sports teams

The number of professional teams within the geography. This figure excludes college teams.

Additional IDA Sources

IDA's Vitality Index, powered by Stantec (2019): The IDA Vitality Index, powered by Stantec, is an interactive, online tool to benchmark the vitality of downtowns across the U.S. The Vitality Index reflects the pioneering IDA research in *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and City Centers*, and measures vitality through three principles identified in the VODT study: economy, inclusion, and vibrancy. Through these three principles, and five core indicators in each principle, the Vitality Index aims to capture the pulse of the downtown and enable urban place managers to quantify and benchmark their district's performance metrics among peer cities. The index uses a benchmarking system to understand how each of three vitality principles contributes to an overall combined score, calculated by comparing each metric to the national average. Most valuable, the index serves as a baseline and provides insights for the strategic evolution of a community.

Quantifying the Value of Canadian Downtowns: A Research Toolkit (2016): This toolkit represents a groundbreaking effort to provide a common set of data and processes to help Canadian place management organizations establish and sustain evaluation and compare progress among downtowns. While geared toward Canadian downtowns, the toolkit has value for urban districts outside Canada looking to move toward data standardization and best practices. In the toolkit, organizations will find directions and insights on collecting, organizing, storing, and presenting downtown-specific data to make the case for continued investment and support. The toolkit includes instructions and rationale for the choice of data metrics, and it recommends core, trend and pulse metrics. The kit organizes the core indicators around the principles of visibility (unique identity, brand, definition); vision (leadership, planning, collaboration); prosperity (economic data); livability (residential and uses); and strategy (types and values of public investment). The core indicators are population density (downtown/city); job density (downtown/city); number of new commercial, residential, and mixed-use buildings; current value assessment of downtown properties

(commercial, residential, institutional); capital investment (downtown/city); transportation modal split; number of large-format grocery stores; amount invested in parks and public realm; and number of annual cultural events and festivals.

The Value of Investing in Canadian Downtowns (2013): This study provides an extensive portrait of the contributions made by downtown areas across Canada, highlighting innovative approaches to revitalization and efforts being applied across the nation. It builds on an initial study phase, completed in 2012, that examined ten of those downtowns, and tracks population, population density, job density and average block size of the downtown core and the municipality. The study organized data under visibility, vision, prosperity, livability and strategy.

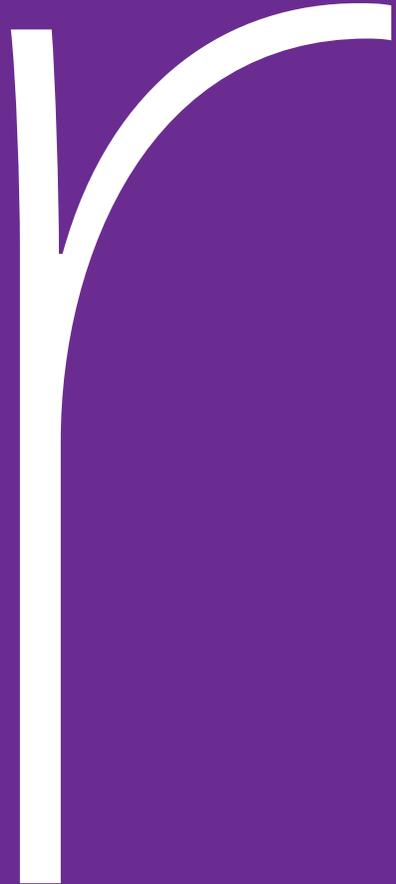
Defining Downtowns—Downtown Rebirth: This policy paper represents the culmination of a year-long effort by IDA and partners to develop an effective way of quantifying how many people and work in and around 231 job centers in 150 American cities. Without standard geographic definitions for downtowns and downtown residential neighborhoods, previous research relied on overly simplified boundaries that didn't capture the idiosyncratic shapes of urban employment nodes and thus failed to capitalize fully on existing federal data. For the first time, *Downtown Rebirth* suggests a way both to define and quantify downtown workforce and population numbers and document how these employment hubs and live-work environments are changing.

The Value of U.S. Downtowns & Center Cities study expands on the efforts of IDA's "*Downtown Rebirth: Documenting the Live-Work Dynamic in 21st Century Cities*" study, which provided guidelines for selecting downtown boundaries. This study uses these recommendations to define downtown beyond the boundaries of a district management organization using a definition of downtown commonly understood by those in that community.

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