



The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities

CALCULATING THE VALUE OF DOWNTOWN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS
A 2022 IDA STUDY

A 2022 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 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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IDA would like to thank the following individuals for their efforts on the 2022 edition of this project:

Corpus Christi
Alyssa B Mason
Kristen Acock
Jenny Bodwell





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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 2022, our analysis has expanded to include 45 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 2019 to show more nuanced employment trends over time. The demographic and jobs data included in the study predates the COVID-19 pandemic, but some real estate, tax, and assessment data include 2020 and 2021 figures.

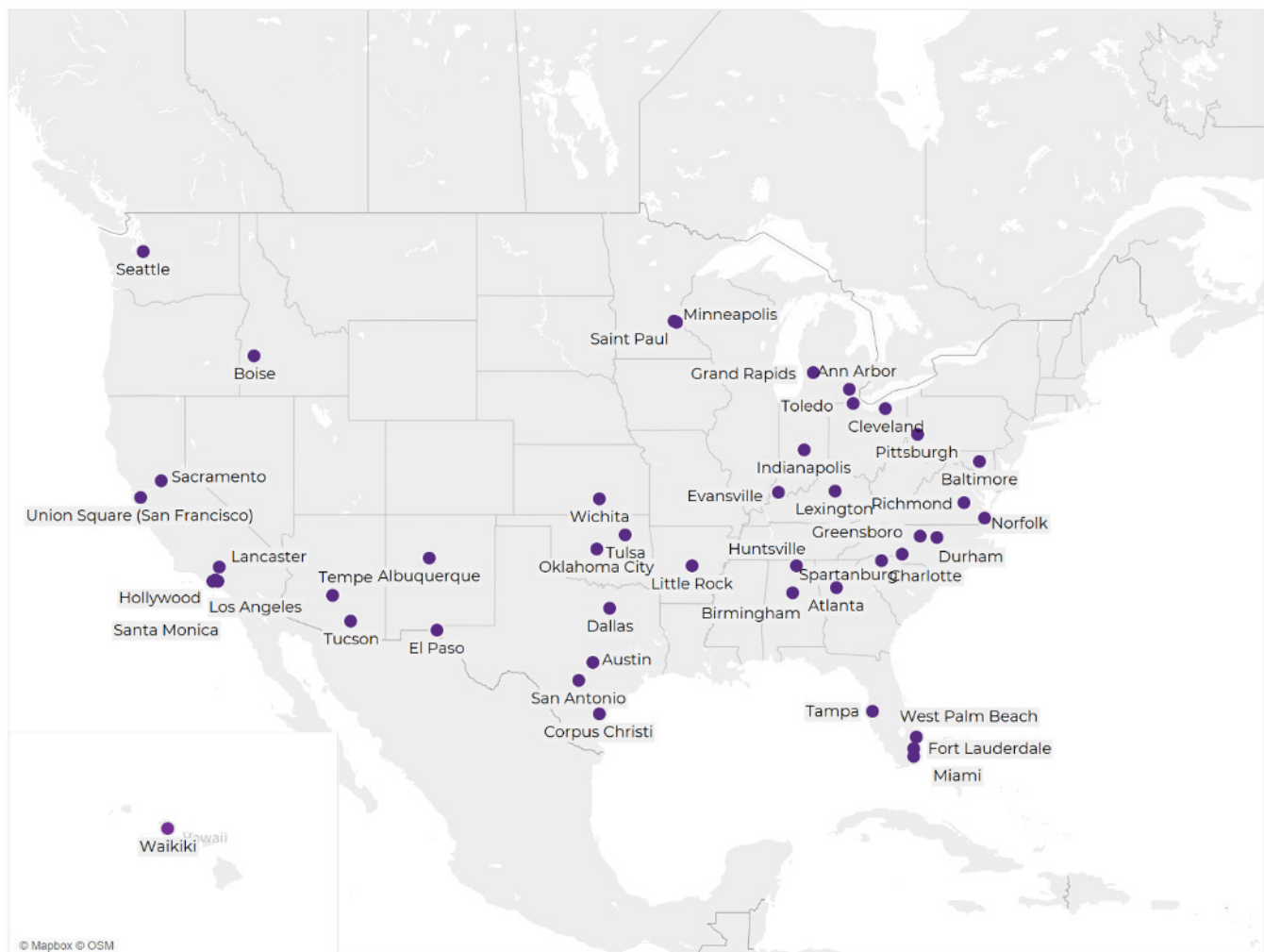
*Refer to the Appendix for the full methodology and list of metrics used in the study.

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 U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities 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.

While the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be seen, in the short-term, the significance of the downtown and how it intertwines with the rest of the city and region has never been more apparent. Many of the hardest hit industries – retail, food, entertainment, tourism, arts and culture, and nonprofit organizations – are most visible downtown and make a downtown so compelling. Despite a slow return-to-office, it is these very sectors that have recovered the fastest and are accelerating the return of a strong citywide economy.

Downtown Corpus Christi stands out as a regional success story. Comprising less than 1% of the city's land area at just 1.2 square miles, downtown is home to nearly 11% of all jobs in the city. Meanwhile, more residents are flocking to the center city. In the two decades between 2000 and 2020, downtown's population saw an increase of almost 1,500. While this may seem small, it represents a 54% increase, significantly outpacing growth in the city and region.

The economic strength of downtown is led by its concentration of workers. Of the 13,705 primary jobs downtown*, approximately one-in-four people work in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector, which has more than doubled in size since 2010. Alone, this industry comprises roughly the same share of jobs as the second and third largest industries—accommodation & food service (13% of all jobs) and public administration (11% of all jobs)—combined. Growth among professional, scientific, and technical services jobs is leading downtown's success in the knowledge industry, which expanded by 28% between 2010 and 2019, three times the rate of the city's growth in this industry. Overall, primary employment downtown increased by 14% between 2010 and 2019.

* The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the employment numbers of the study area much higher, due to the fact that over 6,000 employees at the Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD) were reported as working at CCISD's downtown headquarters. In actuality, over 95% of these employees are located across the CCISD area, not at the downtown headquarters. As a result, commensurate adjustments were made to the All Jobs and Primary Jobs totals and educational services sector data from 2002-2019. These adjustments were based on extrapolation from the current ratio of headquarters staff to all CCISD employees.

Study Area



DOWNTOWN PARTNER

Corpus Christi Downtown
Management District

CITY



Corpus Christi, TX

Although downtown's 3,700 residents make up just 1.1% of the city's residential population, at 5 residents per acre it has a density of residents more than 40% greater than the city's average of 3. This gap has only widened as downtown's population expanded by 15% between 2015 and 2020, even as growth across the city remained flat. This growth has been largest among households earning between \$20,000 and \$39,000, with downtown incomes falling below the averages in many other communities. At the same time, downtown's rents are increasing at a rapid pace—62% between 2010 and 2020, nearly twice as much as the city or region. This trend is leading to a greater share of residents who are considered rent-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income for rent).


Despite these shifts, downtown residents can still expect to spend significantly less of their income on housing and transportation combined than in the city or region. This is made possible by alternate modes of transportation. Roughly one in five downtown residents uses an alternate mode of transportation to get to and from work, on par with other emerging downtowns. Downtown is also home to a robust mix of parks and natural areas—as well as a concentration of retail, accommodations, and food and drink businesses that is roughly six times greater than the citywide average—which make downtown one of the region's most walkable places.

Downtown’s place at the epicenter of the economy of Corpus Christi underscores the important role that organizations like the Corpus Christi Downtown Management District (CCDMD) play in creating and sustaining a healthy local economy. The CCDMD is a professional municipal management district, established in 1992, representing property owners in the downtown Corpus Christi neighborhood known as the Marina Arts District. Its work is made possible through a relationship with the City of Corpus Christi and by the Downtown Reinvestment Zone, which was created in 2008 to provide incentives and funding for revitalization services. Its vision is to create the most vibrant downtown on the Gulf of Mexico by instituting a clean and safe environment, creating a welcoming, well-designed waterfront, developing a robust, sustainable neighborhood, and promoting remarkable, prismatic experiences.


Jobs data used in this report predates the COVID-19 pandemic. Demographic data sourced from the Census Bureau includes the full year of 2020.

Inventory	Downtown	% of City	Per Square Mile	Growth 2010–2020
 RESIDENTIAL UNITS	1,887	1.4%	1,641	0.7%
 HOTEL (ROOMS)	1,795	20%	1,561	6%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2010); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020), CCDMD (2022)

	Downtown	City	Region
 Residential Population			
Population	3,703	326,332	429,120
Residential Share	—	1.1%	0.9%
Residents per Square Mile	3,220	2,012	241
Residents per acre	5.0	3.1	0.4
Growth 2015-2020	14%	3%	-3%
Growth 2010-2020	9%	7%	0%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000, 2010); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

	Downtown	City	Region
 Employment 2019			
Primary Jobs	13,705	126,846	165,884
Downtown share of primary jobs	—	11%	8%
Downtown share of private jobs	—	11%	8%
Employees per square mile	11,917	782	93
Primary Employment Growth 2010–2019	14%	2%	9%
Private Employment Growth 2010–2019	22%	8%	13%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

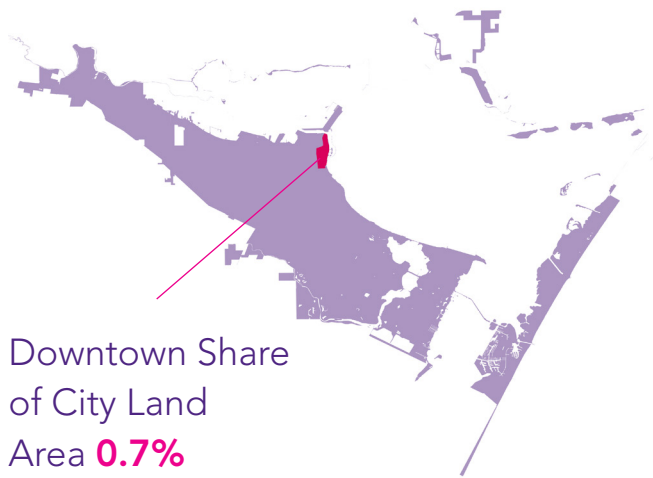
Ranking Downtown Corpus Christi

Using data collected for *The Value of U.S. Districts 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 significance of their population and jobs to their respective cities, as well as density of residents and jobs within the district, assessed value per square mile, the rate of population growth from 2000 to 2020, and the rate of job growth from 2002 to 2019. **Downtown Corpus Christi ranks as an emerging downtown within these classifications.**

For more comparisons, please refer to the Summary section of this report on p.40.

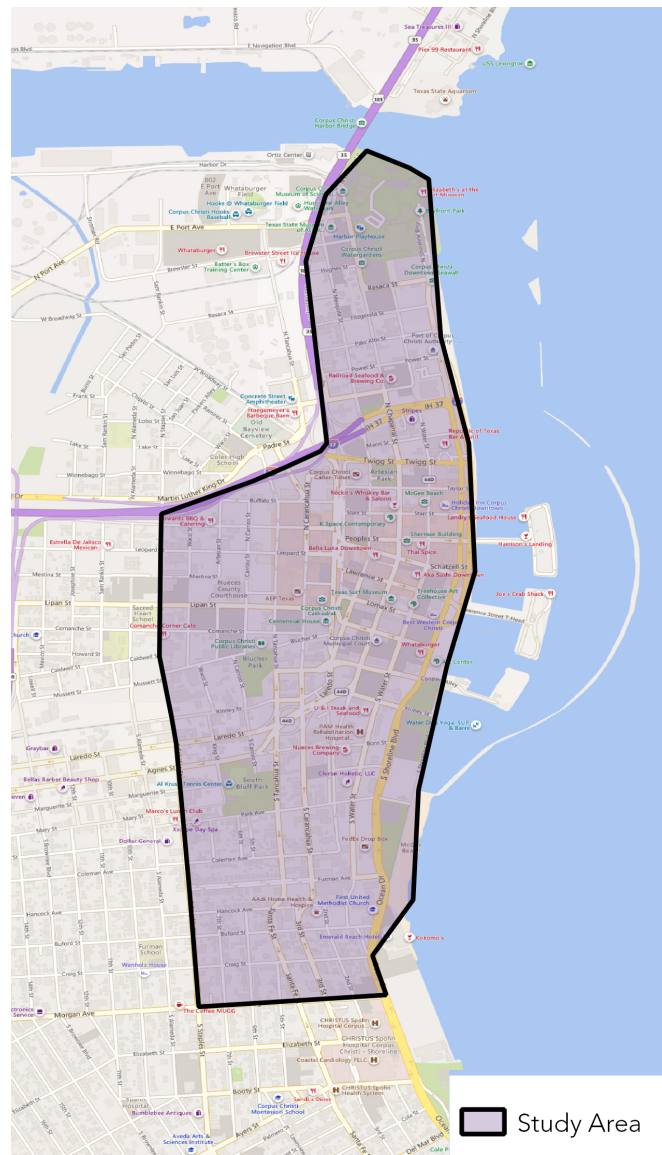
Emerging Downtowns

- Albuquerque
- Birmingham
- Cleveland
- Corpus Christi
- El Paso
- Evansville
- Grand Rapids
- Hollywood
- Lancaster
- Little Rock
- Oklahoma City
- San Antonio
- Spartanburg
- Tampa
- Toledo
- Tulsa
- Wichita



Defining Boundaries

IDA worked with CCDMD to align its downtown study area with census block group boundaries for ease of incorporating publicly available data from the U.S. Census. The study area lines up as closely as possible with the boundaries of Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) #3. IDA recommended that the study area be as close to the commonly understood definition of downtown as possible, and match boundaries to hard edges, roads, water, natural features or highways. The city figure is Corpus Christi, and the regional figures are the Corpus Christi MSA.



Economy | Impact, Innovation

Downtowns make up a small share of their city's land area but have substantial economic importance.

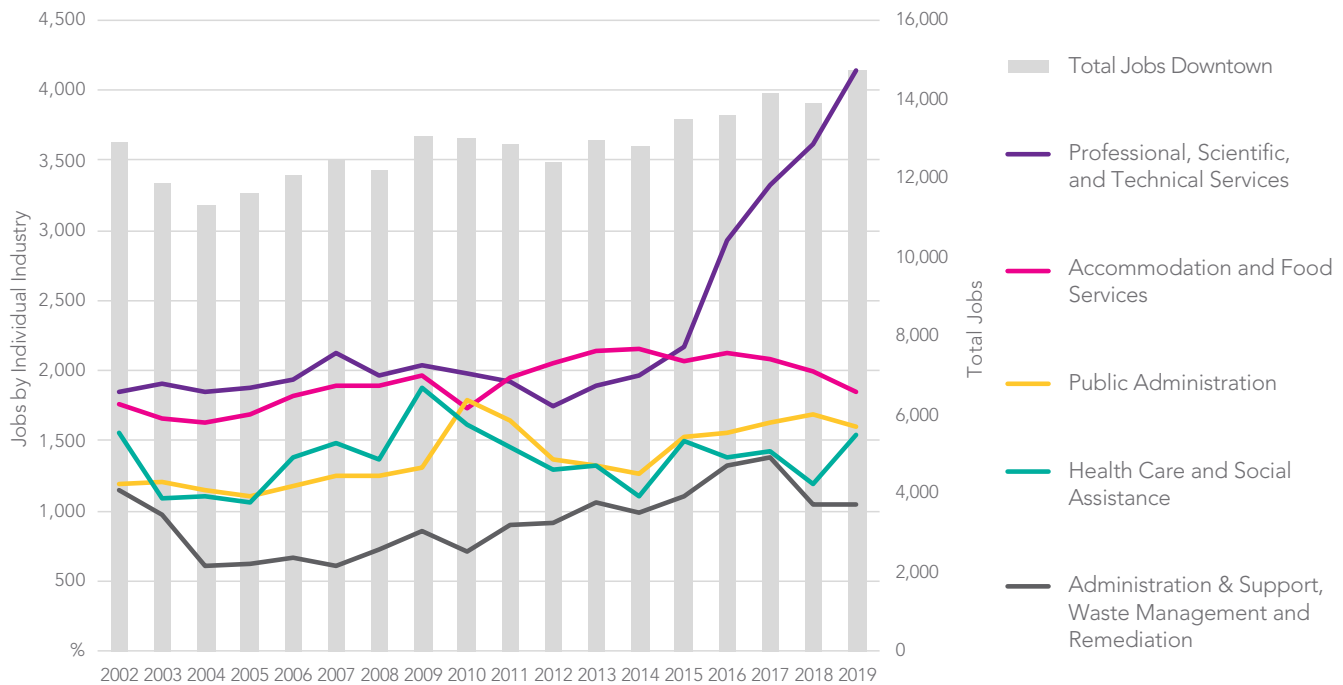
Downtowns make up a small share of their city's land area but have substantial economic importance. While downtowns and center cities constitute a small share of citywide land area, there's no understating their regional economic importance.

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

Downtown Corpus Christi's Top 5 Industries by Employment



Source: LEHD On the Map (2002–2019)
 Note: Please refer to the footnote on p.18.

Jobs

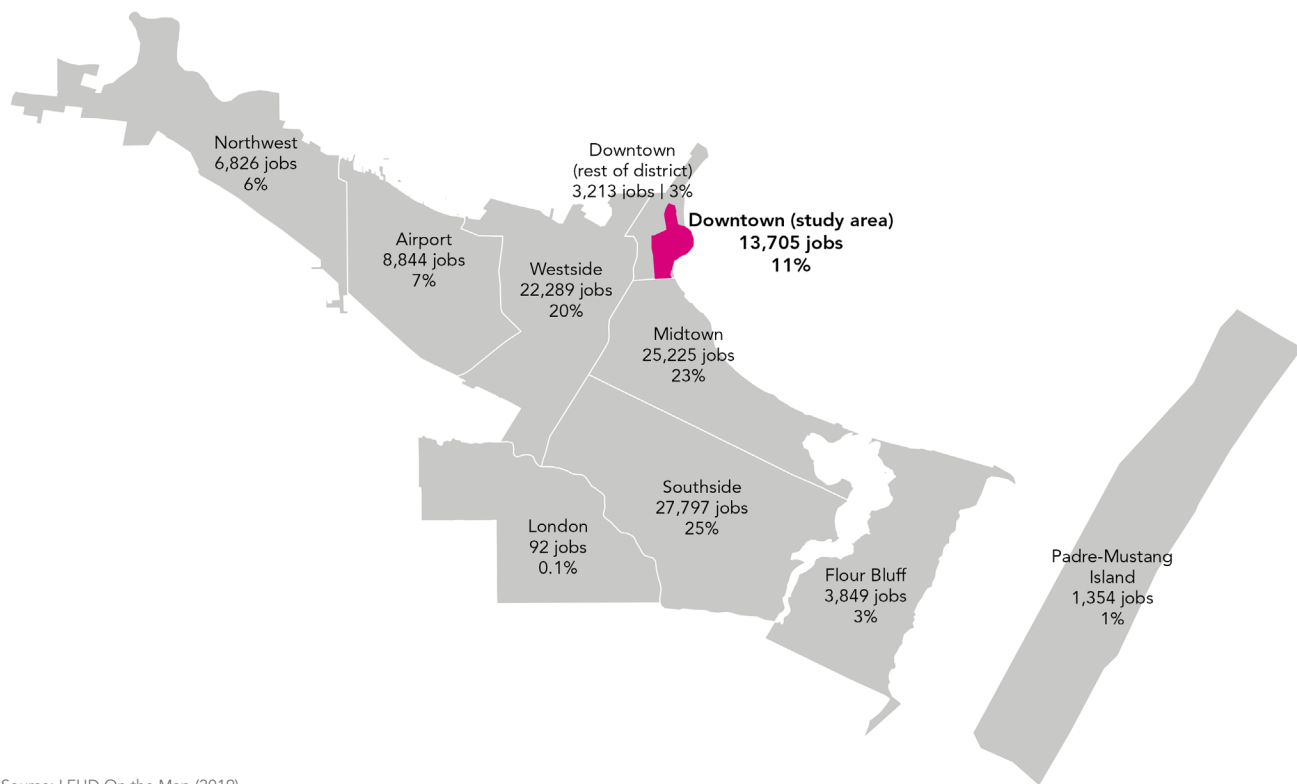
Downtown Corpus Christi is a regional employment hub, with 11% of the city's jobs occupying less than 1% of the city's total land area. No other community within the city or the region can boast this kind of jobs density.

Downtown is becoming increasingly defined by its knowledge industry jobs, which have grown by 28% in the last decade. Of all such jobs in the city, one-in-six is located downtown, an impressive share that demonstrates how growth in this industry is being championed from within the center city, led by significant gains in professional, scientific, and technical services jobs, which more than doubled between 2010 and 2019. In 2019, half of all Corpus Christi's nearly 8,500 professional, technical, and scientific services jobs are located downtown. The management of companies and enterprises sector has also shown significant growth, but it remains a small part of downtown's knowledge industry with only 219 jobs.

Since it was overtaken by the professional, scientific, and technical services sector in 2015, the second largest industry downtown is accommodation and food services. Employment in this sector shrank in the second half of the 2010s, erasing much of the growth the sector experienced in the first half of the decade. Today, accommodation and food services employment is 7% higher than it was in 2010.

Other top industries include public administration and health care and social assistance jobs. Together, these four make up 60% of all jobs downtown. Typically thought of as a stable but slow-growing sector, employment in public administration has hovered between 1,500 and 1,700 jobs since 2015, representing nearly half of all jobs in this industry citywide. There are also many health care and social assistance jobs downtown, even though the study boundary does not include the main campus of the CHRISTUS Spohn

Jobs by Corpus Christi Planning Districts*



Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

*This map excludes all educational services jobs from across the city due to the discrepancy noted earlier where all Corpus Christi Independent School District employees were located downtown, despite the reality that over 95% of employees are distributed across the entire CCISD area. For even comparison, all educational services jobs were removed from the count in this map.

Employment (Primary Jobs)



11%

CITYWIDE JOBS



11%

CITY'S PRIVATE JOBS



50%

CITY'S PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL JOBS



3%

CITY'S CREATIVE JOBS



16%

CITY'S KNOWLEDGE INDUSTRY JOBS

Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

Hospital, which sits just outside of the study boundaries. If the study area did include the hospital, this sector would encompass more than 4,200 total jobs, making it the largest employer downtown.

Even with its impressive share of the city's overall jobs, downtown falls slightly behind other *emerging* downtowns in its concentration of jobs. Yet, downtown's success as an employment center can be measured less in its total number of jobs than in its growth of jobs over time, which vastly exceeds the average for *emerging* downtowns. Since hitting a low of just over 10,500 jobs in the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2012, private sector employment downtown has grown 21%, far outpacing citywide and regional job growth and fueling a strong economic recovery. Since 2002, overall employment has increased 13% compared with an average of 0% job growth among emerging downtowns in this same period.



Employment

	Downtown Corpus Christi	Emerging Downtowns
CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT 2002-2019	13%	0%
% OF CITYWIDE JOBS	11%	18%
% OF CITYWIDE KNOWLEDGE JOBS	16%	24%
% OF CITYWIDE CREATIVE JOBS	3%	28%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2002 and 2019)

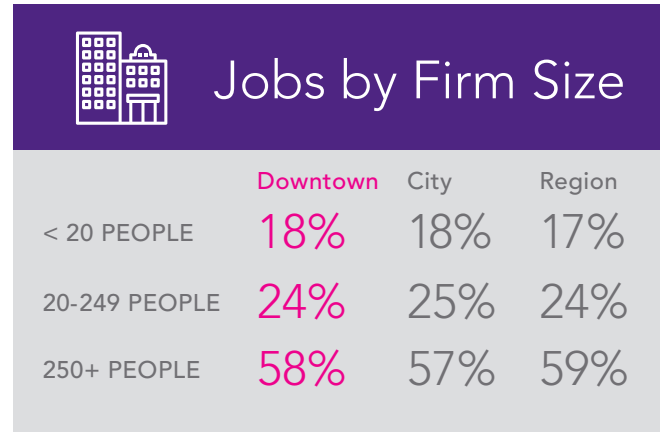
Small Businesses & Startups

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.*

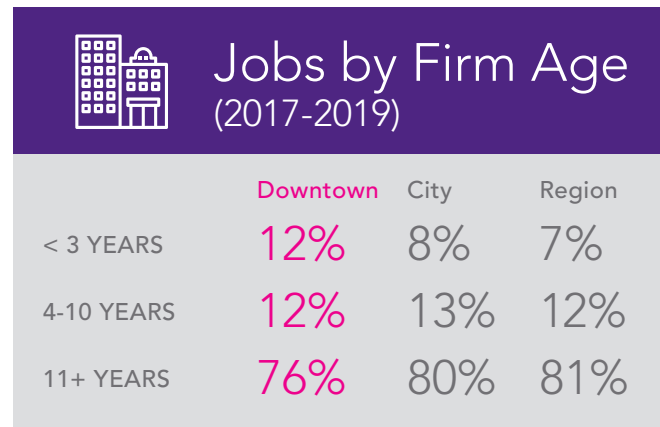
Downtown is a supportive environment for startups and small businesses. Relative to the city and the region, the study area is home to a larger share of jobs at businesses younger than three years old. Meanwhile, there is roughly the same share of jobs at firms smaller than 20 people—approximately 18% of all jobs—across downtown, the city, and the region.

The number of startups appears to be growing in the downtown area, signaling that the right ingredients are in place to encourage entrepreneurs to set up shop in the heart of the city. Since 2011, the share of jobs at downtown firms younger than three years old has surged by 141%. In 2019, these youngest firms employed over 1,500 workers. Over the same decade, downtown’s business mix has gotten larger in size, with the number of large firms employing more than 250 people growing by 54% between 2011 and 2019.

* 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/>

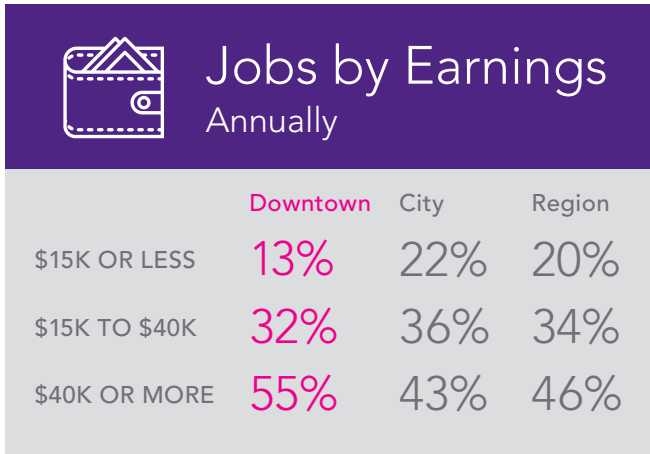


Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)



Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)



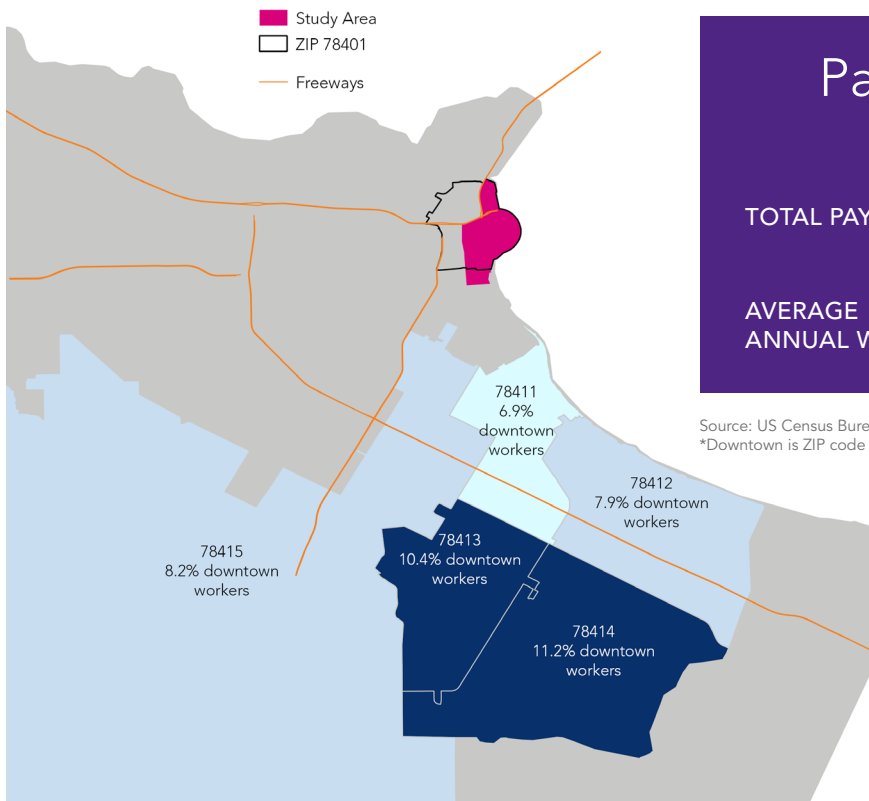


Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

Fiscal Impact

With few downtown workers living within the study area, downtown Corpus Christi draws almost all its workers from throughout the metropolitan area, making the center city an economic engine for the region. Approximately half of downtown workers commute from five ZIP codes south of downtown (see map). Even though these workers live elsewhere, they contribute to the economy of downtown by supporting restaurants, retail establishments, and other businesses.

Wages earned downtown are also recirculated into the broader local economy, with downtown jobs generating 9% of Nueces County’s private sector employee earnings. Wages downtown are also greater, averaging \$46,812 per year—nearly \$5,000 more than in the county. Furthermore, 55% of downtown workers make more than \$40,000 annually, far higher than the citywide share of 43%. Additionally, sales taxes downtown tally to over \$22 million, a significant contributor to the city coffers. This demonstrates the extent to which downtown’s economy fuels the broader economic health of the city and the region.



Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)



Source: US Census Bureau County Business Patterns (2020)
*Downtown is ZIP code 78401

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 in times of crisis.

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

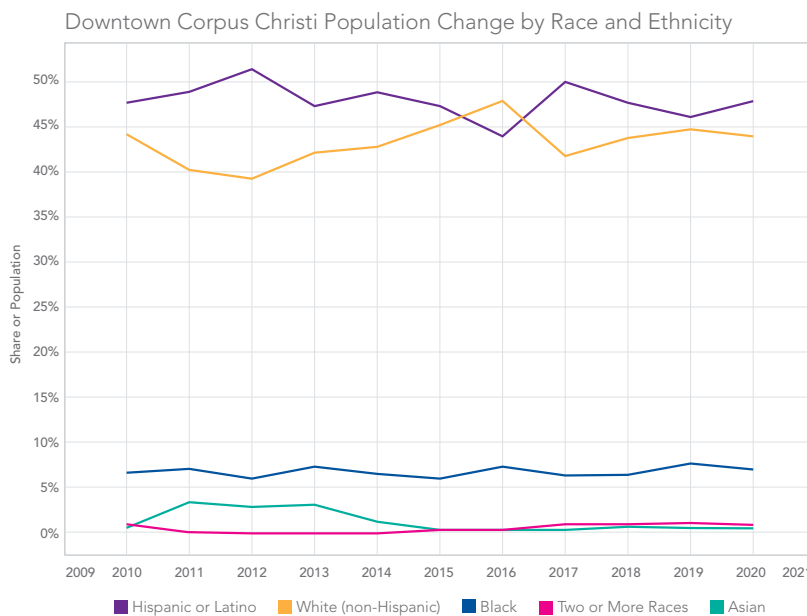
Racial Diversity

In downtown Corpus Christi, there is a racially diverse residential population, with about as many White residents living downtown (44%) as Hispanic or Latino residents (48%). Compared with both the city and the region, downtown’s White population is higher by approximately 15%. Additionally, although they represent a small part of the region’s population, downtown has more Black residents (7%) than the city or region (4% and 3%, respectively).

Despite significant growth in the total populations across downtown, the city, and the region since 2010, the racial

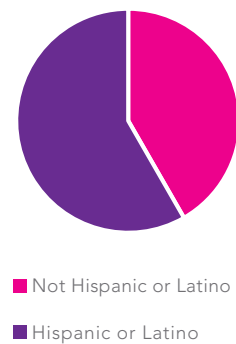
profile of downtown residents has not changed much in this period. While the city and region have become less White since 2010, downtown’s racial composition has remained largely the same, with a small increase in the share of Black residents—a 15% increase compared with a 9% population growth.

The racial composition of downtown workers is nearly identical to the working populations of the city and region. However, a larger share of downtown workers identifies as Hispanic or Latino, regardless of their race. As noted in the Economy section, downtown draws almost all of its workers from throughout the city and beyond, so it should come as no surprise that the racial composition of downtown’s daytime population should look more like the residential population of Corpus Christi.



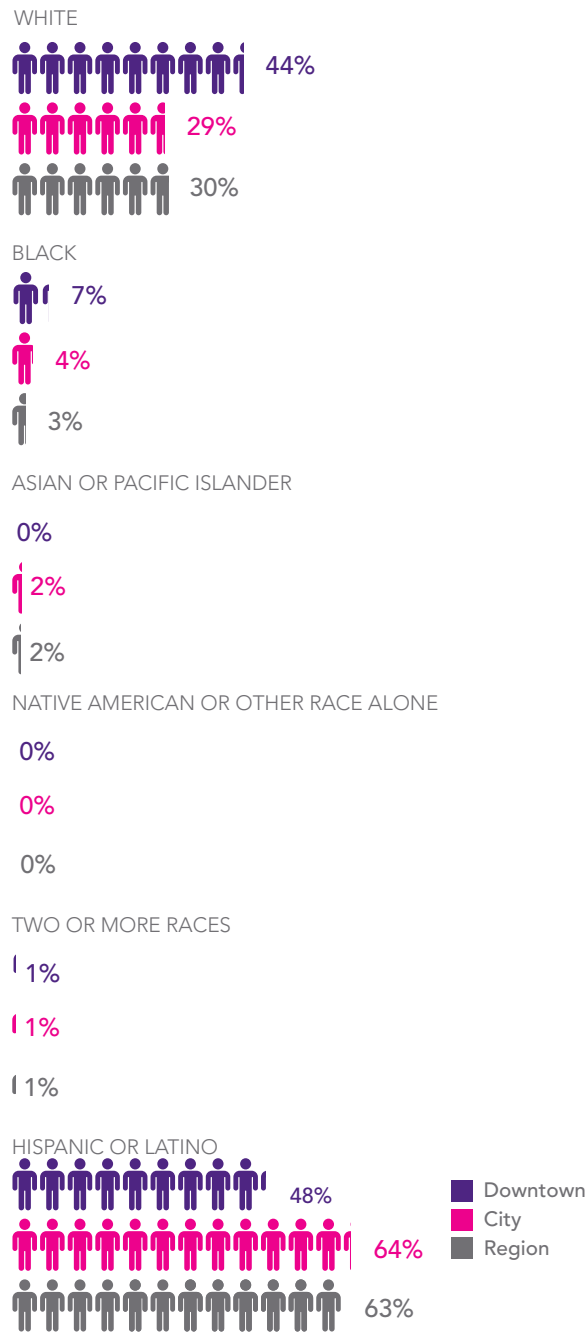
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Downtown Employment by Ethnicity



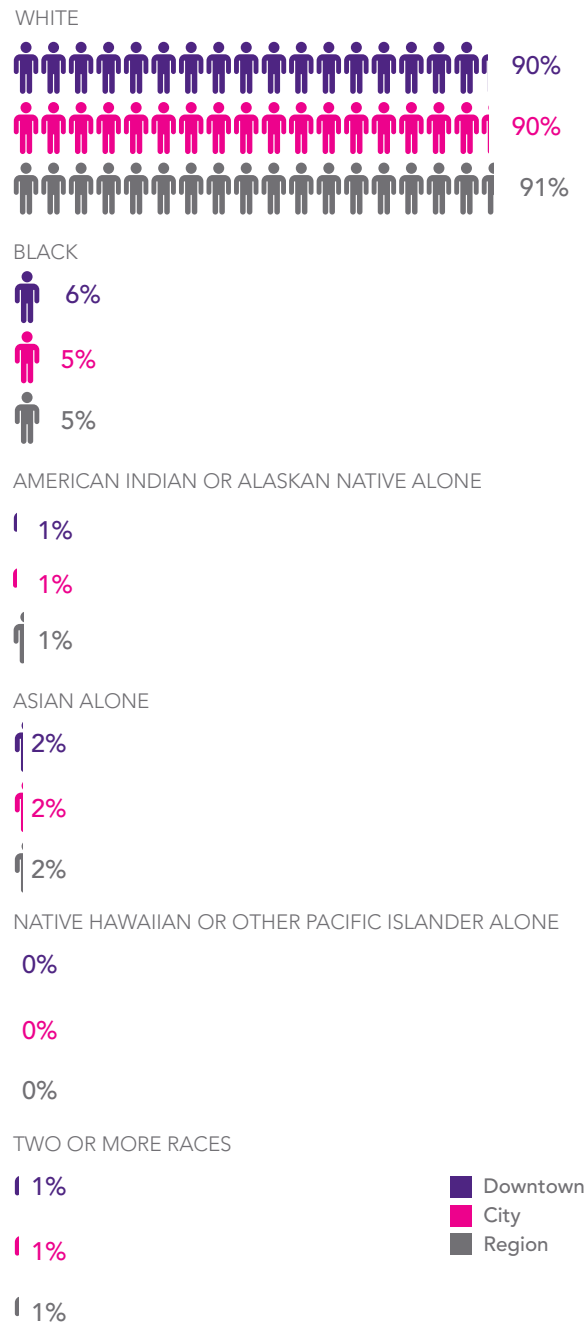
Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

Residents By Race and Ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Employment By Race



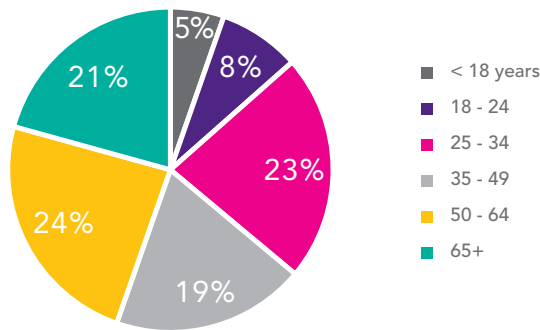
Source: LEHD On the Map (2019)

Note: LEHD and American Community Survey data sets categorize race and ethnicity differently. Individuals who identify as Hispanic ethnicity can also be any of the racial groups (White, Black, etc.), but LEHD data on workers does not count those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity separately, unlike in the ACS and U.S. Census. For clarity only race, and not ethnicity, data is included here.

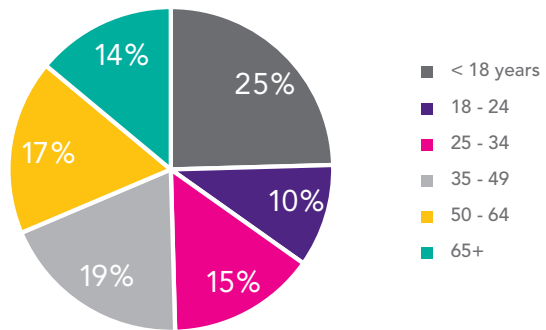
Age Diversity

Downtown skews considerably older than the city or region. 45% of its residents are above the age of 50, and this age bracket's share of the population grew from approximately 35% to 45% in just five years between 2015 and 2020. Only 13% of downtown residents are below the age of 25—a 22% difference from the city, where minors and young adults make up roughly a third of the population. Furthering the gap, these cohorts have shrunk in size since 2010, which could be due to a lack of new housing options downtown, forcing young adults and families to seek housing elsewhere. To an extent, the loss of downtown's youngest residents—in particular, those under the age of 18—is reflective of similar declines citywide. Still, minors make up a quarter of all city residents—its largest age bracket—while comprising just 5% of all downtown residents.

Downtown Corpus Christi Age Diversity

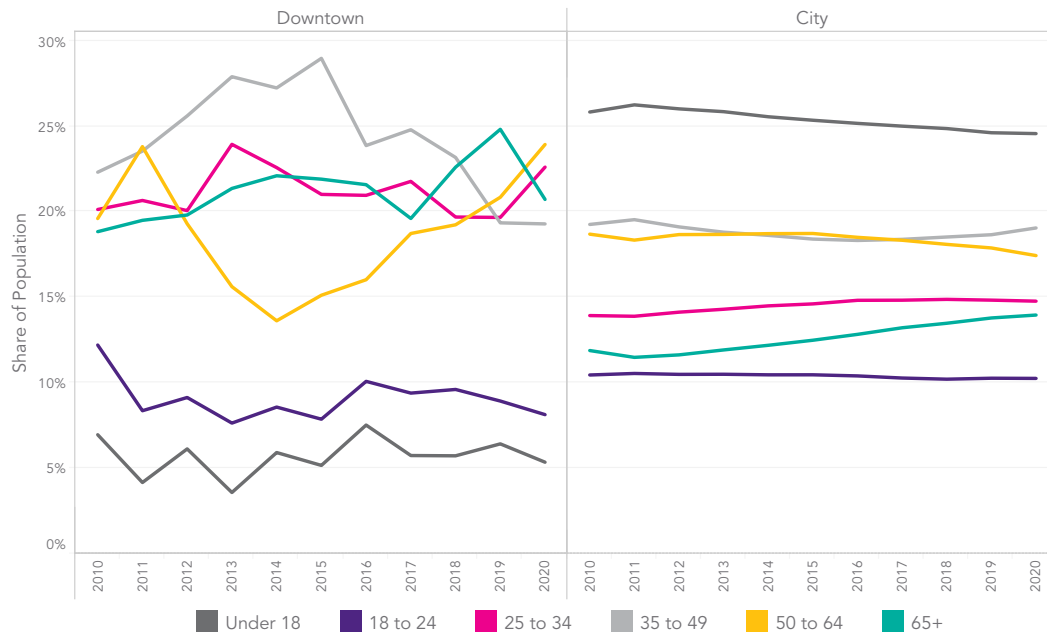


Corpus Christi Age Diversity

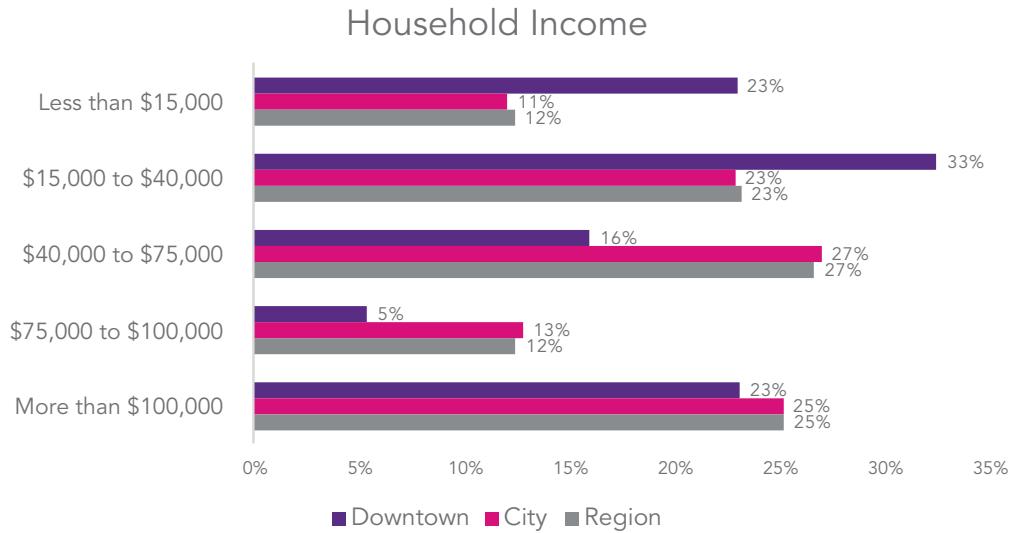


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Corpus Christi Residents' Age Diversity (2010–2020)



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

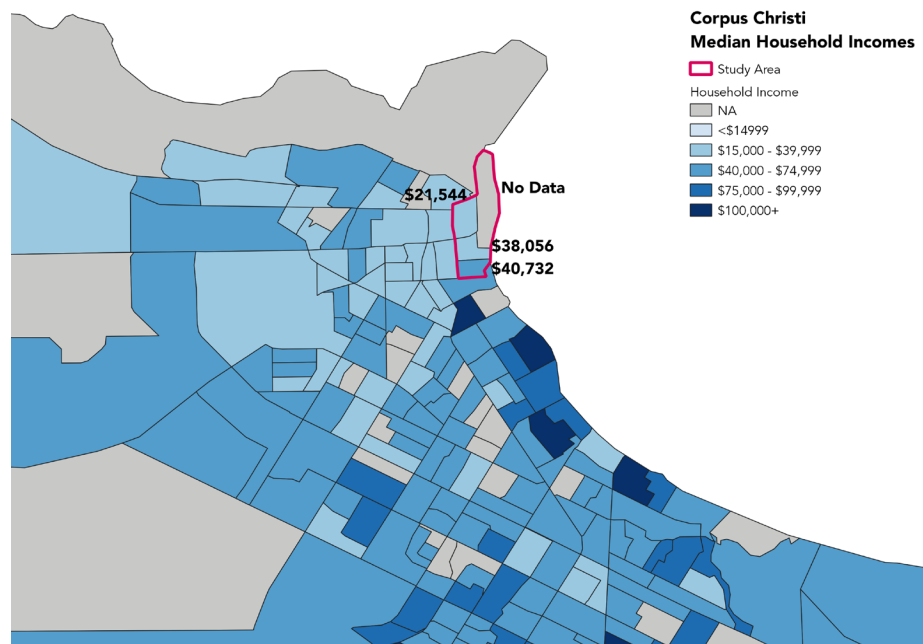


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Socioeconomic Diversity

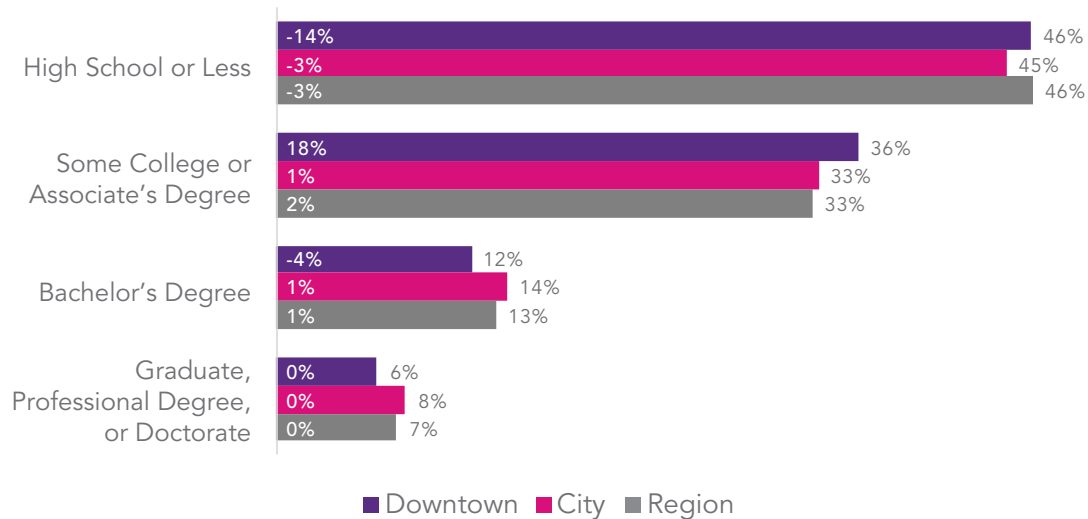
Downtown is home to fewer middle-income earners than other areas of Corpus Christi, with less than a quarter of all households earning between \$40,000 and \$100,000 per year. By comparison, 40% of households in the city and 39% of those in the region are considered middle-income earners. However, downtown is home to twice as many households earning less than \$15,000 and roughly the same share of households with income exceeding \$100,000, suggesting that downtown could be doing more to attract the region’s middle-income residents.

Though downtown residents now have a similar educational profile to those living in the city and region, this is the result of dramatic changes over the past 10 years. As downtown’s population has grown, the educational attainment of its residents has shifted dramatically. In 2010, 60% of downtown residents over the age of 24 had attained a high school diploma or less, a figure that has shrunk to 46% over the past decade. Jobs downtown require a similar level of educational attainment to the residents living downtown, indicating that there are employment opportunities close to home.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (2016–2020)

Educational Attainment for Residents 25+



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2020)
 Note: White numbers at base of bar reflect the percentage point change since 2010.

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 is true in Corpus Christi, where a family living downtown can expect to use about 36% of their income on housing and transportation combined, in line with the median of all study downtowns. This Housing and Transportation Index (H+T[®]) is significantly lower downtown than in the city or region, where a typical family can expect to spend more than half of their income on housing and transportation together.

Even though downtown Corpus Christi scores lower on the H+T[®] Index, it is home to a larger share of residents who are rent-burdened. This is despite rents that are on par with or even lower than the rest of city and region, an anomaly for downtowns across the *Value of Downtowns* study, which tend to have higher rents than the cities in which they reside. In Corpus Christi's case, downtown is home to a higher rate of low-income households—a population that is facing increased pressure due to rising rents. According to Census data, median rents in downtown have risen 62% since 2010, almost double the

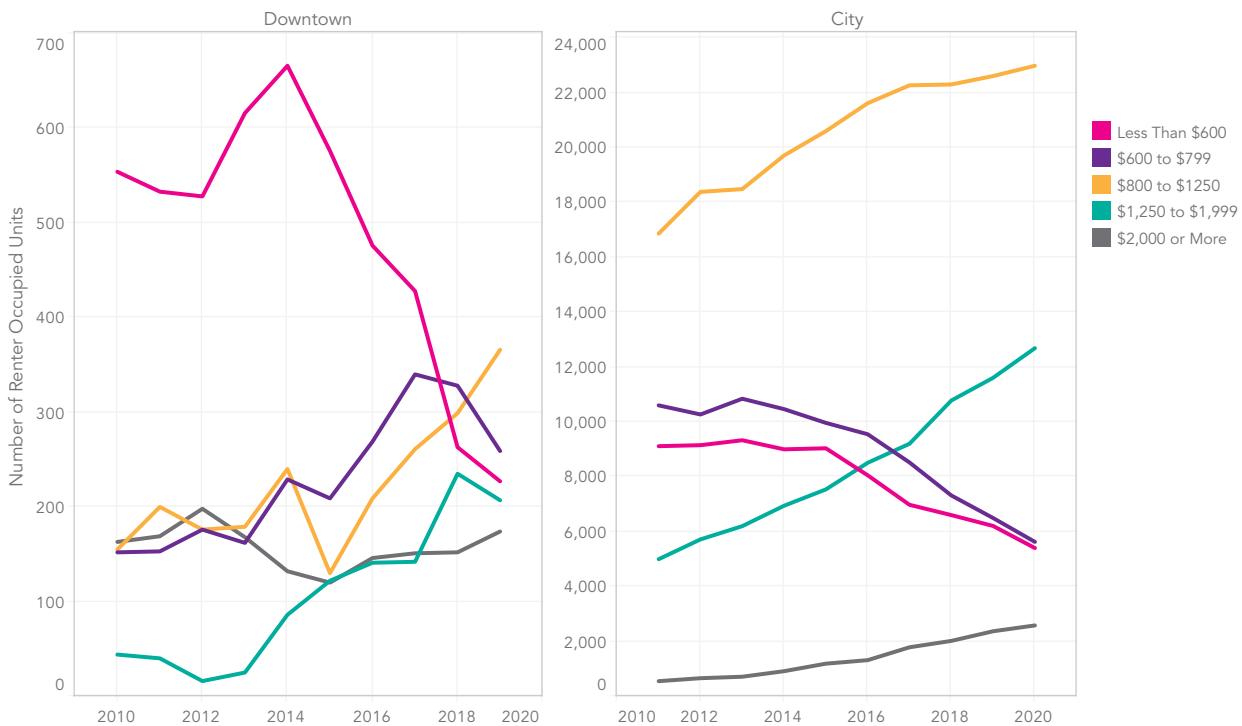
rate of increase across the city and the region. As a result, the number of renters paying the lowest rents under \$600 has fallen dramatically, while rents in most other categories have risen. In the same period between 2010 and 2020, housing inventory growth essentially stagnated in the study area. This is especially troubling given research by real estate consulting company RCLCO, which suggests that demand for downtown housing will continue to grow as renters seek amenities and convenience in the center city and employment continues to rise. RCLCO also found at current return rates, medium- and high-density apartment projects downtown do not easily attract investors, in part due to land prices and parking difficulties.³

A combination of slow inventory growth and increasing demand could lead to continued rent growth downtown as housing supply struggles to keep pace with demand. This situation could prove precarious for downtown's many low-income households in the years to come if housing trends continue. However, new developments like The Palms at Blucher, an income-restricted reuse of a former city fire department property, represent important contributions to downtown's mix of affordable apartments. Announced in early 2022, the project will provide housing for approximately 285 residents in 72 units just a short walk

from the Marina Arts District, which is one of the highest rent areas downtown.⁴ By comparison, the Marina Arts District is home to The Cosmopolitan of Corpus Christi, a new luxury apartment development where average rents exceed \$1,500 a month. The high demand for housing in proximity to downtown’s jobs and amenities has spurred new development plans, and in total there are approximately 160 new residential units in the pipeline within the study area.

As with many downtowns, almost all of downtown Corpus Christi’s residents are renters. Fewer than 10% of its residents own their homes.

Rent Price Change Over Time



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010–2020)

Housing and Transportation Index

Downtown	City	Region
36%	51%	52%

Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology (2022)

Downtown Renters

	Downtown	City	Region
% RENTER OCCUPIED	91%	42%	39%
MEDIAN GROSS RENT	\$955	\$1,055	\$1,048
MEDIAN RENT INCREASE 2010–2020	62%	33%	34%
RENT-BURDENED	59%	45%	45%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Vibrancy | Spending, Fun

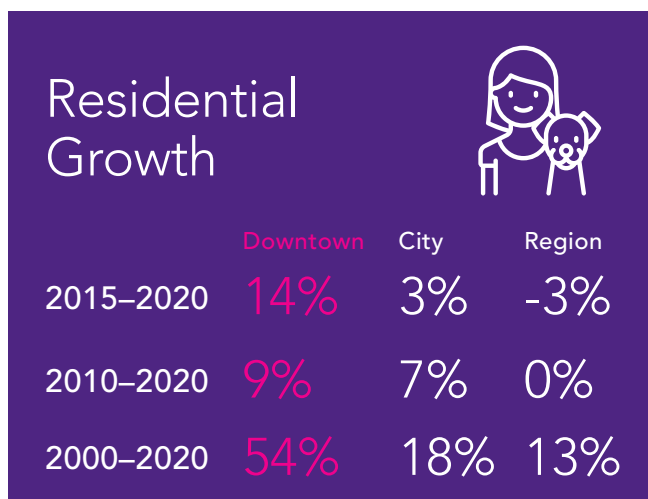
Due to their expansive base of users, downtowns and center cities can support a variety of unique retail, infrastructural, and institutional uses that offer cross-cutting benefits to the region.

Downtowns and center cities typically form the regional epicenter of culture, innovation, community, and commerce. Downtowns flourish due to density, diversity, identity, and use. 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.”⁵ As the higher number of remote workers persists, the vibrancy created by restaurants, shops, concerts, outdoor events, festivals and more will be critical in allowing downtowns to not just survive, but thrive in a changing work environment.

Benefits of Vibrancy: Density, Creativity, Innovation, Investment, Spending, Fun, Utilization, Brand, Variety, Infrastructure, Celebration

Residential Growth

Residential growth signals a fast-changing and vibrant downtown, one that not only has a working population in the daytime but also activities and people around throughout the day and night. Downtown Corpus Christi’s residential population has surged in recent years, consistently outpacing the city and region’s growth rates over the past two decades and placing it near the top of emerging downtowns in growth rate. While the regional population shrank between 2015 and 2020, and city growth slowed within that time frame, downtown has continued to attract residents at a rapid clip. Compared to other downtowns in this study, Corpus Christi stands out with exceedingly high population growth from 2000 to 2020—the third highest among emerging downtowns after Wichita and Cleveland, and more than double the cohort’s average.

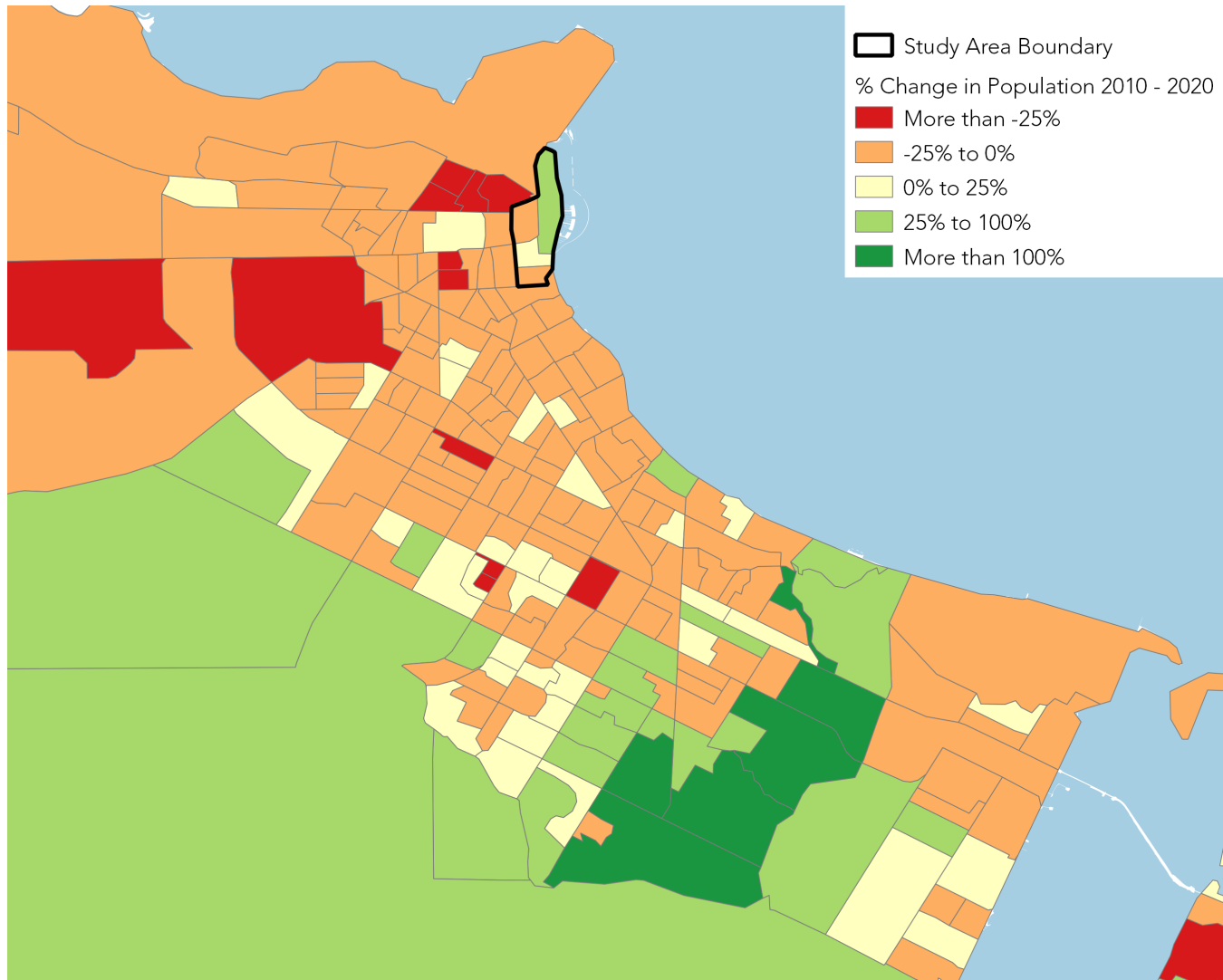


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

	Downtown Corpus Christi	Emerging Downtown	City of Corpus Christi
GROWTH 2000–2020	54%	20%	18%
DENSITY (RESIDENTS/ACRE)	5	6.8	3

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000), American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

Population Change in Corpus Christi 2010 to 2020



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2020)

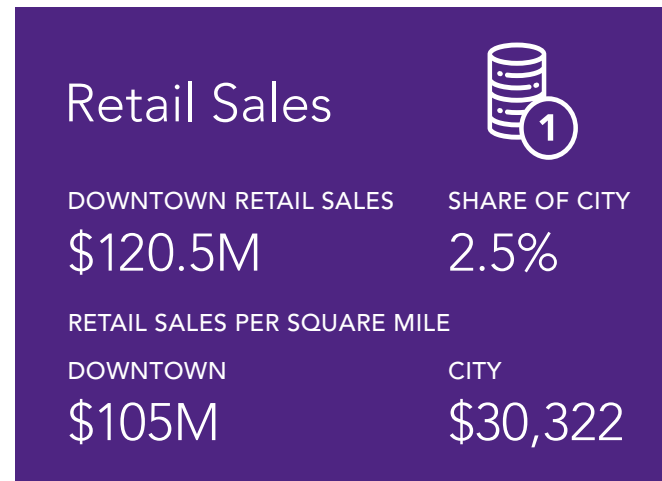
This level of growth was made possible, in part, by the relatively small size of downtown's population; in 2010, downtown recorded just 1,087 residents. Therefore, new developments, which may usher in 50 units or more, can contribute to significant growth in the number of people living downtown. That said, a concerted effort by city leaders is contributing to growing interest among people who visit downtown in living there as well. According to the CCDMD's 2021 Downtown Perception Study, half of downtown patrons indicated they would consider living downtown, up from a low of 2% in the 2017 survey.

Not all areas of downtown are experiencing the same level of growth. Within the study area, one of the fastest growing areas is the Marina Arts District (in green on the map), which experienced 40% growth in the past decade. Home to a high concentration of hotels, restaurants, and attractions, the Marina Arts District is one of the few areas in the city core to have experienced growth exceeding 25%. Just to the south of Marina Arts (as indicated in yellow), the Medical District experienced 19% growth. Further to the northwest and south within downtown, the population declined between 2010 and 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. Compared to the rest of Corpus Christi, downtown is an exceptionally vibrant market for retail that generates \$120 million in annual sales, according to ESRI estimates. Overall, this represents 2.5% of the Corpus Christi retail sales market and more than three times the market concentration of the city overall. Not including food and beverage establishments, downtown retailers generate almost \$70 million in sales, representing 1.7% of the overall city retail market in less than 1% of its land area. This translates to about three times as many retail sales per square mile in downtown. While downtown remains of central importance to the city's retail landscape, retail rents downtown have remained affordable. Retail rents downtown are at \$12-14 per square foot, slightly lower than the rates of \$15psf found in areas south of downtown. This lower overhead cost encourages entrepreneurs and small business proprietors to locate downtown, further building downtown's vibrancy.

However, when stacked up against other cities in *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* study, downtown Corpus Christi has room for growth. Other emerging downtowns average about double the share of their cities' retail sales, comprising 5.6% of citywide retail sales per year, compared with downtown Corpus Christi's 2.5%. Furthermore, Corpus Christi's 103 storefronts per square mile is approximately 40% less than the average among emerging downtowns of 175 storefronts per square mile. Right-of-way improvement projects, such as the proposed Reimagine Water Street vision, which aims to beautify the streetscape and improve shade cover by more than 20-fold, may help to further amplify downtown's retail environment. Still, with approximately 2,818 businesses in the retail, accommodations, or food and drink trades in all of Corpus Christi, downtown's share of 119 such businesses translates to a storefront density that is approximately six times greater than the citywide average—a staggering difference that places downtown at a clear advantage as a regionally dense retail destination.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2022)



Retail

	Downtown Corpus Christi	Emerging Downtowns
% OF CITYWIDE RETAIL SALES	2.5%	5.6%
RETAIL SALES PER SQUARE MILE	\$105M	\$204M

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2022)

ESRI Market Potential Index

National Average = 100

	Downtown	City
ATTENDED A MOVIE IN LAST 6 MONTHS	101	101
WENT TO LIVE THEATER IN LAST 12 MONTHS	99	88
WENT TO A BAR/ NIGHT CLUB IN LAST 12 MONTHS	95	97
DINED OUT IN LAST 12 MONTHS	88	94
WENT TO A FAMILY RESTAURANT IN LAST 6 MONTHS	88	100
WENT TO A FAMILY RESTAURANT: 4+ TIMES A MONTH	92	99

Source: Esri, Esri-Data Axle, Esri-MRI-Simmons, Esri-U.S. BLS, U.S. Census (2022)

Among food and beverage establishments alone, downtown also stands out. Annually, there are more than \$50 million in food and drink sales downtown representing 7% of the overall city sales activity in this sector. Using ESRI's Market Potential Index as an indicator of whether residents in a given area consume more or less than the average national resident, downtown stacks up fairly well. With 100 as a national average, ESRI indexes downtown Corpus Christi at 95 for the category of "Went to a bar/night club" and 88 for "Dined out." Although within range of the national average, these figures are somewhat lower than the citywide index values of 97 and 94 respectively, perhaps due to the lower median income of downtown residents. These figures measure local demand, and as sales in the food and drink sector are remarkably strong downtown, it is likely that a large share of those sales are generated by those living outside the study area.



Live Events and Activities

Arts and entertainment are strongly represented in downtown Corpus Christi, as reflected by the strong number of live entertainment venues in such a small geographic area. 13.3% of all city-wide sales in Arts and Entertainment happen downtown, totaling \$20.9 million. This makes downtown one of Corpus Christi’s leading entertainment destinations with its 10 live entertainment venues, most of which are concentrated in the popular Marina Arts District. Establishments like House of Rock and Executive Surf Club have become mainstays for live music downtown. Using ESRI’s Market Potential Index, downtown outperforms the city by 11 points in the category “Went to live theatre in the last 12 months.” According to the index, downtown is roughly on track with the national average in this category, registering 99 MPI.

Hotels

In the hotels and accommodations industry, sales downtown make up an even larger share of the citywide market, despite downtown having a small total number of hotels. In less than 1% of the city’s area, downtown hosts 20% of Corpus Christi’s hotel rooms, and about 8% of its hotels. At \$77,652,000, accommodation sales downtown represent 22.9%—or nearly a quarter—of the overall city sales. Though downtown does have a large share of Corpus Christi’s overall accommodation sales, it also has slightly fewer hotels and rooms than the average emerging downtown.



Source: Corpus Christi Downtown Management District (2022)

Hotels	Downtown Corpus Christi	Emerging Downtowns
HOTELS	8	12
HOTEL ROOMS	1,795	2,192

Source: City of Corpus Christi, South Texas Economic Development Center, Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities reports

Hotels

	DOWNTOWN	CITY
HOTELS	8	99
HOTEL ROOMS	1,795	8,821
AVERAGE HOTEL OCCUPANCY	47%	49%
ANNUAL VISITORS	1.9M	10M
AVERAGE DAILY VISITORS	5,205	27,397

Source: City of Corpus Christi, South Texas Economic Development Center (2022)

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.”⁶ 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



Deep in the heart of Texas—closer to the Mexican border than to its bigger siblings, Houston and Austin—Corpus Christi is undergoing an urban renaissance. Since its founding as a frontier trading post in the 1830s, the largest city on the Texas coast and the sixth largest port in the United States by tonnage has become a regional hub for everything from healthcare and education to shipping and agriculture.⁷

At the center of Corpus Christi’s success is its downtown. Named a Texas Cultural District in 2017—a designation reserved for roughly 50 such places that exemplify the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development—downtown is rich with cultural assets that attract more than two million residents and visitors annually. This nod from the state’s arts commission only underscores what locals already knew: downtown offers something not easily found elsewhere in Texas. It’s home to two-thirds of the city’s locally and nationally designated historic structures. An even larger share of the city’s museums, including the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, and Texas State Museum of Asian Cultures, are located downtown. All of this in a district that’s only slightly larger than one square mile.

Downtown’s revitalization has been a long time in the making. Like many cities, the 1980s were hard on downtown Corpus Christi. Retail giants Woolworth’s and Frost Bros. exchanged their downtown locations for suburban malls. By a certain point, even the strip clubs and adult movie theaters that took over vacant downtown storefronts were beginning to move out. But by the end of the decade, led by the opening of popular restaurants Water Street Oyster Bar and Executive Surf Club, people began returning.⁸

Today, these two establishments are far more than vestiges of the past—they anchor one of the city’s most sought-after destinations. Home to restaurants, bars, retail shops, and entertainment venues, the Marina Arts District has become a hub of activity and nightlife situated along a 10-block-long stretch in the heart of downtown. And it’s growing quickly. According to a strategic plan released in 2021 by the CCDMD, approximately 20 so-called catalytic development projects have been recently completed in this district alone, with nearly as many projects currently in the works. To seize on this momentum, the CCDMD worked with a local advertising agency to develop a brand for the Marina Arts District, which bridges the water-focused activities in the marina and the creative culture of the lower downtown area, inviting visitors to “launch their craft.”

By every measure, efforts to revitalize downtown have been a success. Together with the Sports, Entertainment and Arts (SEA) and Water's Edge districts, the Marina Arts District hosts dozens of year-round events, including the CCDMD's annual MuralFest and a first Friday ArtWalk series. These arts events have helped support an estimated 75 public art installations and approximately 30 arts or entertainment businesses downtown. Downtown is also home to the Dia de los Muertos Festival, which attracts more than 70,000 people downtown in one of the largest Day of the Dead festivals in the United States. All told, approximately 525,000 people venture downtown each year for the CCDMD's events—with scores more dining out and shopping downtown.



Downtown Destinations



45

HISTORIC
STRUCTURES



6

MUSEUMS



75

PUBLIC ART
INSTALLATIONS



30

PARKS AND
NATURAL AREAS

Source: National Register of Historic Places (2019); CCDMD (2021)



Social
Media

INSTAGRAM POSTS WITH HASHTAG
#GODOWNTOWNCC

31,581

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

24,200

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

28,679

Source: Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook counts as of September 2, 2022

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 the city. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought resilience to the forefront of many people’s minds. Over the longer-term, downtowns have proven to bounce back quickly from economic downturns. Social resilience means that residents are able to access necessary health services and health workers, but also that strong community support enables community members, both residents and businesses alike, to depend upon each other for support. The green spaces and trails that contribute to environmental resilience have seen renewed importance as outdoor respites. Each of these elements illustrates how downtown contributes to the holistic resilience of the community and city at-large.

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



Downtown Community Resources



1

LIBRARY



1

RECREATION AND COMMUNITY CENTER



7

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS



30

PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

Source: Corpus Christi Downtown Management District (2022)



Economic Resilience

Economic resilience describes the ability for a downtown to weather adverse economic events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, as a result of having a balanced mix of employment sectors and other factors that are essential to a community's long-term success.

Over time, with significant growth in sectors like professional, technical, and scientific services and public administration, and the contraction of other sectors like information, downtown's overall employment diversity has become less diverse. In 2002, the top 10 industries represented 84% of jobs. Today, they represent 90% of jobs, indicating that the downtown employment market is becoming slightly more top-heavy with a few major industries making up the majority of downtown employment.

The past also reveals insights into downtown's ability to weather economic downturns, using the Great Recession as a good litmus test for how downtown, the city, and the region might fare under similar economic stressors. With less than a 1% change in employment numbers from 2009 to 2010, and only a -1% change from 2010 to 2011, downtown does not appear to have been heavily impacted by the Great Recession. Similarly, the city and region as a whole saw minimal impact around 2010.

Poverty

	Downtown	City
RESIDENTS UNDER THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	26%	16%
HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A COMPUTER	19%	9%
HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS	4%	7%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)



Health

	DOWNTOWN	CITY
AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY	76	78
NO LEISURE-TIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	38%	31%
WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE	18%	18%

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2020); CDC (2017); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)



Social Resilience

Downtowns act as hubs for social resilience and offer a place for people to gather in times of need. 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 30 parks and natural areas covering 101 acres, a community center, the main branch of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries system, and seven religious institutions, downtown Corpus Christi residents, employees, and visitors can meet, learn, and participate in civic life in multiple places. These amenities help make up for the absence of any public schools within the study area, which is likely due in large part due to the small number of school-age children downtown. There are, however, two private schools downtown.

Social resilience in downtown also means having a healthy population, particularly in a public health crisis. Downtown residents have a slightly shorter average life expectancy than average for the city and are somewhat less likely to exercise regularly. As some studies have previously linked these metrics to poverty, the higher incidence of low-income households in the study area may partially explain this trend. According to data revealed earlier in this report, downtown has a disproportionate number of low-income households compared to the rest of the city and region. This can be seen clearly with 26% of downtown residents below the poverty threshold, much higher than the city-wide number of 16%. In particular, the area known as Uptown, west of Upper Broadway, is home to a significantly lower median household income compared to the rest of downtown.

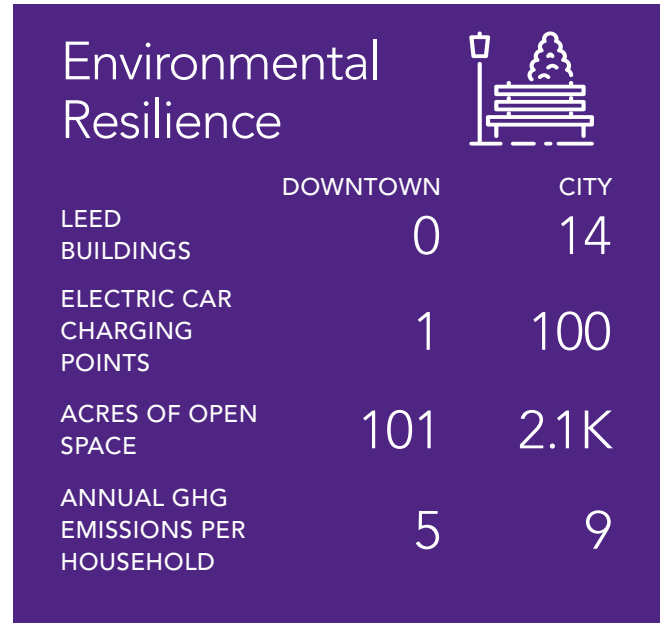
As more work, schooling, entertainment, and other daily activities move online—a shift accelerated by the public health response to COVID-19—access to a suitable computer or mobile device and to reliable internet service has grown increasingly important. Almost 1 in 5 downtown households do not have a computer, roughly double the 9% figure of the city and region. However, nearly all downtown households—96%—have some form of internet access, which is slightly better than the citywide share of 93%.

Environmental Resilience

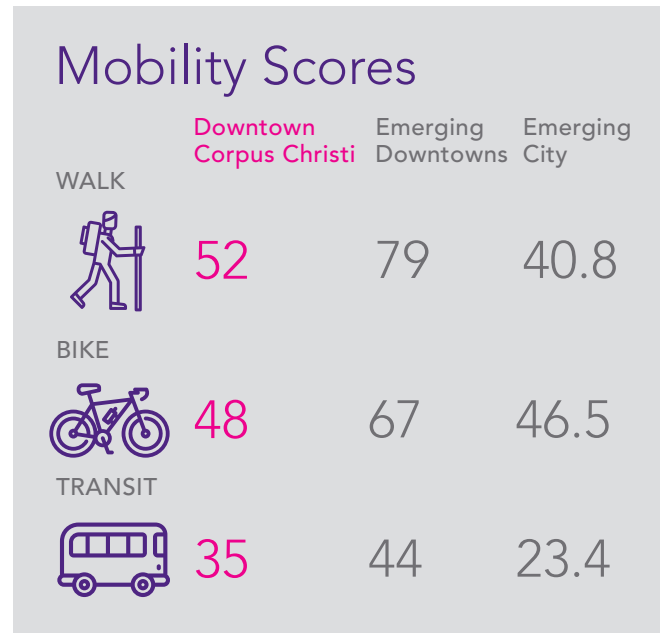
A downtown's environmental resilience plays a major role in assuring long-term sustainability in its region. In Corpus Christi, the proximity of jobs, housing, shopping, and recreation options that downtown provides contribute to a more environmentally friendly lifestyle for its residents. According to data from the Center for Neighborhood Technology, downtown households contribute about 44% fewer greenhouse gas emissions annually than households in the rest of the city and region—approximately 5 tons vs. 9 tons per household. Despite its location in a generally car-dependent region, downtown residents are more likely to choose transit options or alternative commuting methods, leading to slightly fewer commuters who drive alone. Having additional, flexible transportation options at their disposal allows downtown to be a more sustainable community.

That said, driving alone is becoming an increasingly common way of commuting to work for those who live in downtown Corpus Christi. In 2010, fewer than 50% of its residents drove alone as their mode of commute, a share that jumped to approximately 80% in 2020. This is perhaps attributable to the growth in downtown's population being largest among those who work elsewhere. Though its population has increased substantially, the number of individuals both living and working downtown did not significantly change between 2002 and 2019.

Despite this shift—and having Walk, Bike, and Transit scores that are substantially lower than the averages for emerging downtowns—Corpus Christi's downtown stacks up surprisingly well against its peers in other cities for its share of sustainable commuters. Roughly one in five downtown residents uses an alternate mode of transportation to get to and from work, on par with other emerging downtowns. Although its environmental resilience is potentially threatened by the substantial increase in non-sustainable commuters, projects that aim to improve the pedestrian experience, such as the Reimagine Water Street visioning project, may help reverse these current trends. The project, which aims to improve shade cover in the public right-of-way and improve the connection between key parts of downtown, is currently in a conceptual phase.

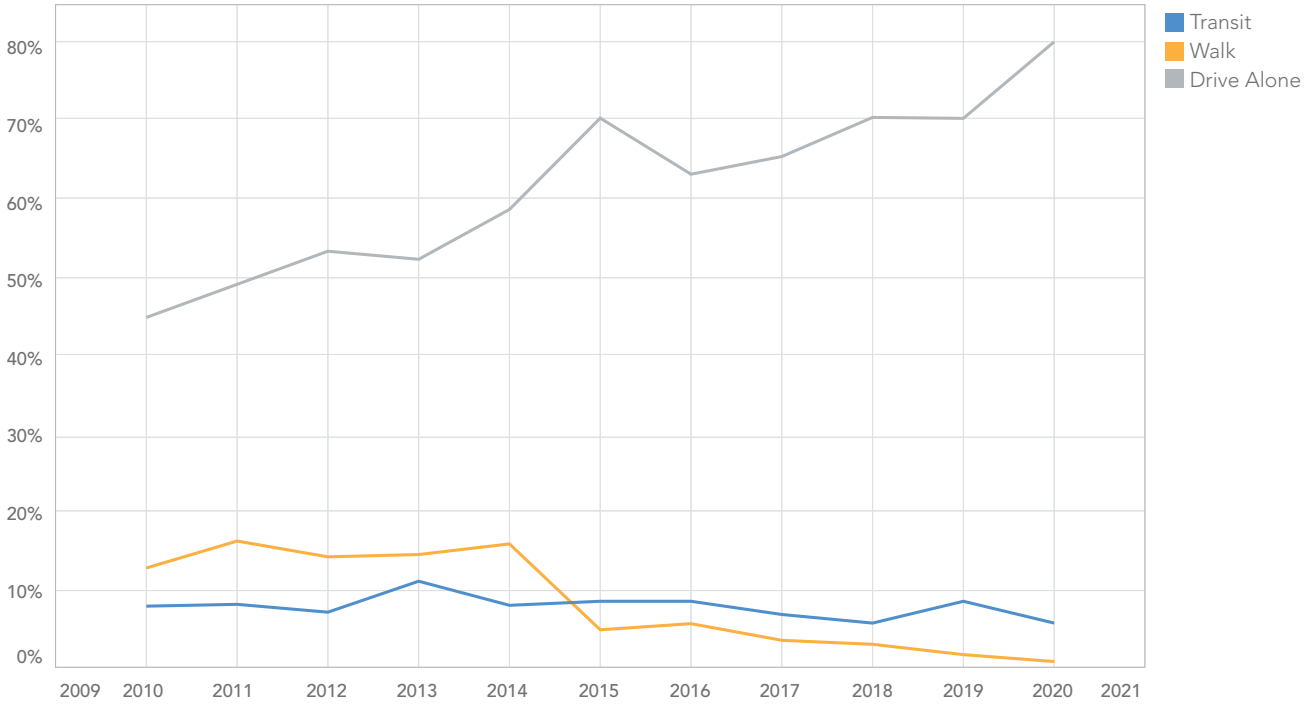


Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology (2017), City of Corpus Christi Parks & Recreation Department, US Green Building Council, CCDMD (2022)




Source: Walk Score (2022)

Downtown Corpus Christi Commute Mode Share



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)

SUSTAINABLE COMMUTE



DOWNTOWN CORPUS CHRISTI	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS	EMERGING CITIES
20%	21%	6%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020)



Downtown Profile | Summary

Despite experiencing a substantial increase in its population of workers and residents over the past two decades, downtown Corpus Christi is home to a smaller share of the city's workers and residents than its peer cities across the United States. Because of this and other factors, it fits firmly within our emerging downtowns tier.

In the opening pages of this report, we noted how downtown Corpus Christi is a "regional success story." While this is true for many reasons, perhaps no statistics illustrate this more clearly than the rapid growth in the number of people working and living downtown, which is transpiring at a faster pace than most other emerging downtowns. While citywide job growth was relatively flat at just 2% total growth between 2010 and 2019, downtown jobs grew by 13%—or seven times as quickly. In the same period, downtown's residential population expanded by 9%. From 2015 to 2020, downtown population growth accelerated even further, increasing by 14% in those 5 years, a rate more than four times as fast as the city in that time period. Even though its population is relatively small—downtown recorded just over 2,000 residents at the turn of the millennium—the speed at which this growth is occurring within the study area is having a transformative impact on downtown, the city, and the region. Downtown residents now number nearly 4,000.

Downtown also benefits from its concentration of things to do. Even though it is outpaced by other emerging downtowns in its share of citywide retail sales, downtown Corpus Christi packs in an impressive 119 businesses in the retail, accommodations, and food and drink sectors. Collectively, these businesses occupy just over one mile of land for a volume per square foot that is approximately six times greater than the citywide average. Sales by these businesses top \$120 million annually, representing more than three times the market concentration of the city. Downtown's 10 venues with live entertainment, along with its 30 parks and natural areas—many of which are located along or near the historic waterfront—create the

These tables show how Corpus Christi compares to its peers in the emerging tier and to the citywide averages for the tier. For the full set of cities by tier, accompanying data points, and methodology, please refer to The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities compendium at the IDA website (downtown.org).

Emerging Downtowns

ALBUQUERQUE	GRAND RAPIDS	SAN ANTONIO
BIRMINGHAM	HOLLYWOOD	SPARTANBURG
CLEVELAND	LANCASTER	TAMPA
CORPUS CHRISTI	LITTLE ROCK	TOLEDO
EL PASO	OKLAHOMA	TULSA
EVANSVILLE	CITY	WICHITA



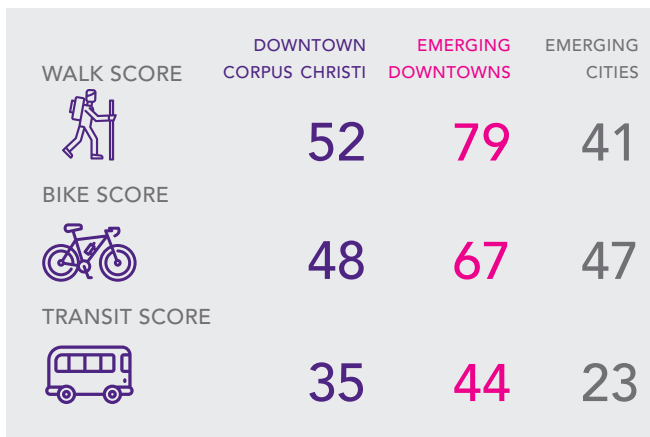
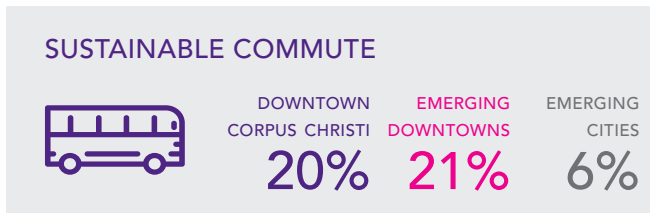
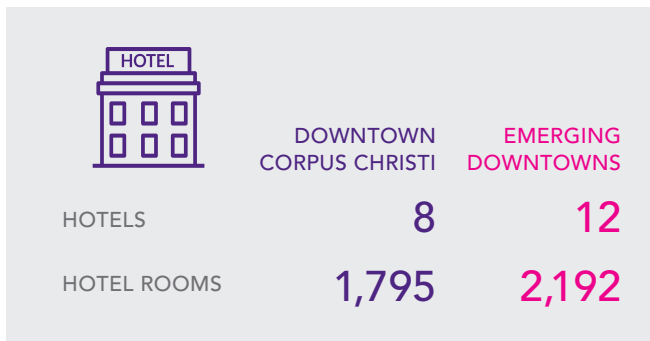
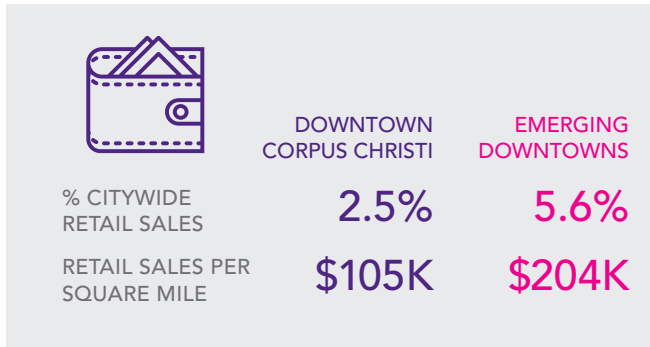
RESIDENTS

	DOWNTOWN CORPUS CHRISTI	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS	EMERGING CITIES
GROWTH AVG. 2000–2020	54%	20%	10%
DENSITY RESIDENTS / ACRE	5	6.8	4.6
MEDIAN INCOME HOUSEHOLD	\$32K	\$27K	\$51K
DIVERSITY INDEX	75	64.4	63.4



EMPLOYMENT

	DOWNTOWN CORPUS CHRISTI	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS
GROWTH IN DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT (2002–2019)	13%	0%
CITYWIDE JOBS	11%	18%
CITYWIDE KNOWLEDGE JOBS	16%	24%
CITYWIDE CREATIVE JOBS	3%	28%
RESIDENTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	18%	38%



kind of value that cannot be easily replicated in other communities. Its eight hotels have an outsized presence in the city, generating nearly a quarter of the city’s accommodation sales.

Downtown’s success over the past decade is leading to some growing pains. If unchecked, they could spell trouble for downtown’s inclusivity, sustainability, and—ultimately—its viability in the long run. Home to a large number of low-income households and median rents that have risen 62% since 2010, downtown’s residents are already more likely to be considered rent-burdened. Making matters worse, medium- and high-density apartment projects downtown are not easily attracting investors, in part due to land prices and parking difficulties. This could widen the gap further between supply and demand, proving precarious for downtown’s many low-income households in the years to come if housing trends continue.

Its environmental resilience is also at risk if current trends continue. Even though it outperforms the city by a factor of two-to-one across many sustainability metrics, a far greater share of its residents is choosing to drive as a sole mode of commuting than just a decade prior. This is likely the result of the influx of new residents downtown, most of whom travel elsewhere for work. However, investments in the city’s transit and bike networks, as well as projects like Reimagine Water Street, will incentivize people to find alternatives to car travel. It will also help Corpus Christi catch up with other emerging downtowns, where Walk, Bike, and Transit scores are considerably higher.

Despite these challenges, downtown Corpus Christi is well-positioned for success as an *emerging* downtown. Downtowns across each of the tiers in IDA’s study confront similar issues as they encounter periods of growth. That’s precisely why the *Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* study exists: to not only show the impact a downtown has on its city and region, but to empower local leaders to work with the public and private sectors to support the continued evolution of downtown.



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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 30 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 45 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 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2019 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 change in employment during COVID-19 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 occasionally subdivide block groups over time, 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.

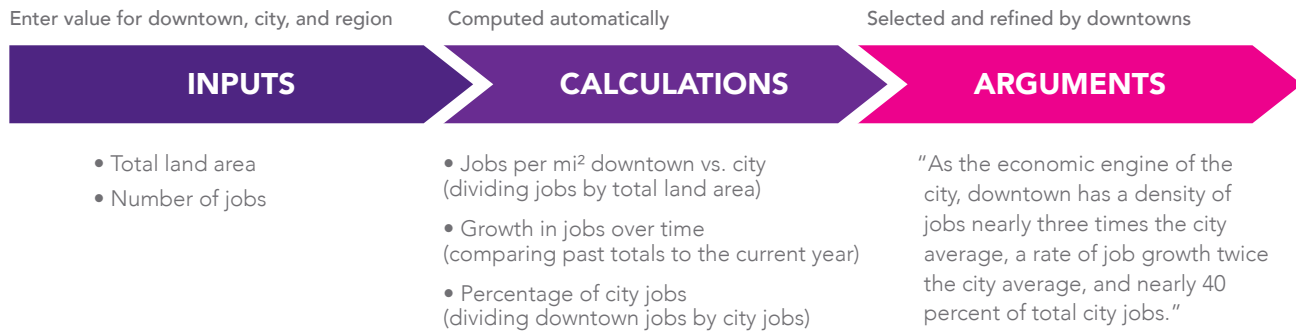
CALCULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

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 45 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 (2002–2019)
 - o Percent growth in population (2000–2020)

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 2021 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	2020 (Annual Updates)
American FactFinder	Demographic, Housing, Crime, Health, Employment, Economy	Public	Allows for selection of sub-geographies down to the census block group level	2020 (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	2019 (Annual Updates)
Center for Neighborhood Technology	Housing affordability, Sustainability, Income	Public	Allows for selection and exporting at as small as the block group level	2017 (Updates Unscheduled)
National Register of Historic Places	Historic structures and districts	Public	None	2020 (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	2020 (Annual Updates)
Geolounge	Map of Fortune 1000 companies	Public	None	2018 (Annual 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 2019 (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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