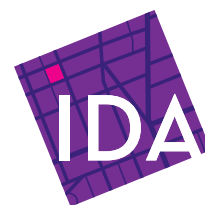




The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities

CALCULATING THE VALUE OF DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE, INDIANA
A 2021 IDA STUDY

A 2021 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.

IDA Board Chair: Tami Door, President & CEO, Downtown Denver Partnership

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The IDA Research Committee is composed of industry experts who help IDA align strategic goals and top issues to produce high-quality research products informing both IDA members and the place management industry. Chaired and led by IDA Board members, the 2019 Research Committee advances the work set forth in the IDA research agenda by publishing best practices and case studies on top issues facing urban districts, establishing data standards to calculate the value of center cities, and furthering industry benchmarking.

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THE VALUE OF U.S. DOWNTOWNS AND CENTER CITIES



Stantec's Urban Places

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

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

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IDA would like to thank the following individuals for their efforts on the 2021 edition of this project:

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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 in 2020 and 2021, which were fundamentally impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In some ways the pandemic highlighted the importance of vibrant urban places. The prolonged absences from our favorite places and activities in some measure deepened our appreciation for them. As the pandemic recedes, downtowns will once again be focal points for commerce and activity.

Typically, despite a relatively small share of a city's overall geography, a downtown delivers significant economic and community benefits across both city and region. Downtown serves as the epicenter of commerce, capital investment, diversity, public discourse, socialization, knowledge and innovation. It provides social benefits through access to community spaces and public institutions. It acts as a hub for employment, civic engagement, arts and culture, historical heritage, local identity, and financial impact. In short, the proximity and density that downtown and center cities create drive the city around them to thrive.

While proximity and density were challenged in the short-term due to the pandemic, the urgency of responses in 2020 and 2021 also presented new opportunities to adapt downtowns and center cities to a more human-centric future. The success of open streets and outdoor dining in cities large and small have started to lead to permanent programs that prioritize people over cars. Stronger public-private partnerships have streamlined regulations for everything from new business permits to cocktails-to-go. Responding to the racial awakening of 2020, many organizations are working to address bias internally, and in their public programming. Several urban place management organizations are creating programs to specifically support minority entrepreneurs so that downtown better represents the community.

Longer-term, the effects of the pandemic on urban cores are still emerging. The permanence of remote work remains an open question. Richard Florida cites work by economist Nick Bloom that estimates that ultimately, remote work will account for one-fifth of all work-days, compared with just 5% pre-pandemic.¹ This shift will decrease the daytime population in urban centers and affect consumer spending downtown, but it also presents an opportunity to pare down auto-centric infrastructure and create justification for districts to evolve beyond a 9 to 5 worker-focused dynamic to more complete live, work and play communities. The concept of the 15-minute city, the idea that everyone living in a city should have access to essential urban services within a 15 minute walk or bike ride, has gained in popularity in the past year 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 recovery. 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 organization (UPMO). UPMOs have invaluable insights into the areas they manage and have the relationships that help them unlock essential data sources for this study.

The study aims to emphasize the importance of downtown, to demonstrate its unique return on investment, to inform future decision making, and to increase support from local decision makers. 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 2021, our analysis has expanded to include 43 downtowns and center cities across the U.S.

The analysis focuses on how downtown provides value in the five organizing principles of economy, inclusion, vibrancy, identity, and resilience. IDA and our UPMO partners work together to collect hundreds of individual data points, including historic and current data, 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 2017 to show more nuanced employment trends over time. In total, we utilize more than 8,400 individual pieces of data for each participating downtown, and our downtown database now contains around 310,000 datapoints. 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.

Urban Place Management Organizations

IDA's members are urban place management organizations that manage growing districts to create prosperous city centers, commercial neighborhoods and livable urban places for all—from residents to visitors to business owners. These UPMOs shape and activate dynamic downtowns, city centers and neighborhood districts.

Since 1970, property and business owners in cities throughout North America have realized that revitalizing and sustaining vibrant downtowns, city centers and neighborhood districts requires focused attention beyond the services municipal governments alone can provide. These private-sector stakeholders come together to form and fund nonprofit management associations that deliver key services and activities within the boundaries of their districts. UPMOs typically operate as business improvement districts (BIDs), business improvement areas (BIAs), partnerships or alliances.

Value of Downtowns Participants



ECONOMY



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

INCLUSION



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

VIBRANCY



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

IDENTITY



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

RESILIENCE



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

Methodology Overviewⁱ

The first step to this study is to identify the right boundaries that capture a downtown district. Geographic parameters often vary across data sources and may not align with a UPMO's jurisdiction. This study has adopted a definition of the commercial downtown that moves beyond the boundaries of a development authority or a business improvement district. IDA's Value of Investing in Canadian Downtowns report expresses the challenge well: "Overall, endless debate could be had around the exact boundaries of a downtown, what constitutes a downtown and what elements should be in or out. Yet it is the hope of this study that anyone picking up this report and flicking to their home city will generally think: Give or take a little, this downtown boundary makes sense to me for my home city."³ IDA worked with each UPMO to identify the boundaries of their downtown for this project, giving priority to alignment with census tracts for ease of incorporating data from the U.S. Census.

To measure the value of downtowns relative to their cities, the analysis relies on data that could be collected efficiently and uniformly for a downtown, its city, and its region. IDA collects data from multiple national databases, such as the U.S. Census, LEHD, and ESRI. In addition, IDA gives each participating UPMO a list of metrics to collect from local sources like county assessors or commercial real estate brokers. IDA then analyzes the data to identify study area trends and benchmark the area against the city, the region, and other downtowns in the study.

The analysis includes meaningful qualitative observations to acknowledge unique features or add nuance and context to trends revealed in the data. As an example, universities often sit on the edge of a downtown study area. Even if not technically inside downtown, the university's students typically represent a large user and consumer base for downtown and the analysis describes how the student presence influences the downtown environment.

The analytical focus of the report is to make and support value statements about downtown by comparing it to the city, identifying its growth trends over time, and illustrating its density. For instance, data patterns revealed this for 2017 employment totals in downtown Seattle:

Downtown is a strong employment and industry hub for the city, with a concentration of high-paying and high-growth employment sectors. 43% of all citywide jobs are located downtown, as are 58% of citywide knowledge jobs. Overall, employment has increased 14% since 2010, outpacing both the city and region. In addition, the number of knowledge jobs grew 28% during that period. Each square mile supports 85,924 workers on average, more than ten times the average job density citywide.



ⁱ Refer to the appendix for the full methodology.

Known Limits to this Study

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 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2018 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 several 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.

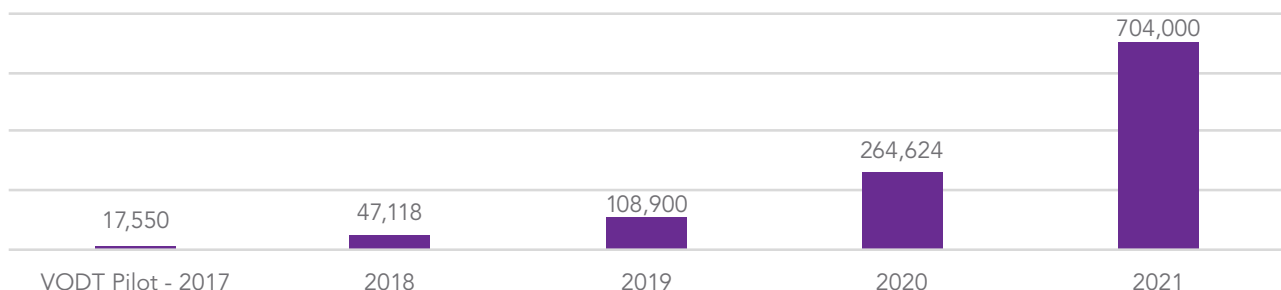
Improvements Over Previous Years and Areas for Future Research

This year has seen yet another evolution of the Value of Downtowns product featuring new tools, more data, and new methods of analysis. Our Value of Downtowns database now integrates with Tableau, a data visualization software. With this software, we are able to make connections and draw comparisons between downtowns in a far more nuanced and intuitive way. This report includes some of these new visualizations. For example, charts like households by income over time, or housing units by gross rent over time reveal trends and relationships that we previously were not able to analyze.

The Value of Downtowns database has grown exponentially over past iterations, particularly as this year we have included demographic and jobs data for all years available since 2000, rather than only collecting four benchmark data years.

This level of additional data and capability has increased our ability to understand comparisons between downtowns and center cities. This is reflected within this report, as well as with the launch of IDA's newest research offering, the Value of Downtowns: Comparisons. The Comparisons study focuses on understanding how a given downtown's performance stacks up to its closest peers, and evaluates a smaller number of metrics than this Value of Downtowns study.

Value of Downtowns Total Datapoints







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 downtown and how it intertwines with the rest of the city and region has never been more apparent. Many of the hardest-hit sectors—retail, food, entertainment, tourism, arts and culture, and nonprofits—rank among downtown's most compelling businesses. Their return to business will mark the start of full recovery and accelerate the return of a strong economy citywide. (Note: All demographic data used to produce this report predates the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Downtown Evansville is one of Indiana's most important economic centers. Measuring only 1.2 square miles, it is a small downtown that delivers outsized benefits to the city and the region, serving a workforce of nearly 18,000 people and accommodating a density of jobs that is more than seven times greater than the average square mile elsewhere in the city.

At the same time, downtown lacks the residential density of similar-sized downtowns and even neighborhoods within the city of Evansville. It houses just 2.2% of the city's residents and its population declined by 8% in the decade between 2010 and 2019, even as the city saw a small population gain. While this trend might seem like cause for alarm, the downward trend is not spread evenly through downtown. Census Tract 18, which comprises half of this report's study area and includes the core of downtown around Main Street, gained 400 residents in the past decade. Meanwhile, Census Tract 17, the second tract in downtown, saw its population decline by 28% in the same period, sustaining a loss of about 700 residents. Because Census Tract 18 is home to a much higher concentration of jobs and activity, this finding indicates that some residents have been drawn to more amenity-rich portions of downtown as new residential developments have entered the market, while other residents have left downtown altogether.

Study Area



DOWNTOWN PARTNER
Downtown Evansville Economic
Improvement District
CITY
Evansville, IN



Residential Population

	Downtown	City	Region
Population	2,558	118,588	314,960
Residential Share	n/a	2.2%	1%
Residents/Sq. Mile	2,097	2,506	215
Growth 2010–2019	-8%	1%	-12%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000); American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

While downtown is experiencing a shift in where people live, data indicate the job market downtown has remained more stable. In keeping with citywide trends, primary job growth was flat in the period between 2010 and 2019 as the region grew modestly at 3%. Home to one in five of the city's jobs and an estimated 3.4 million square feet of office space, downtown is an impressive concentrator of jobs that primarily serves the industries of public administration, management of companies and enterprises, and construction.



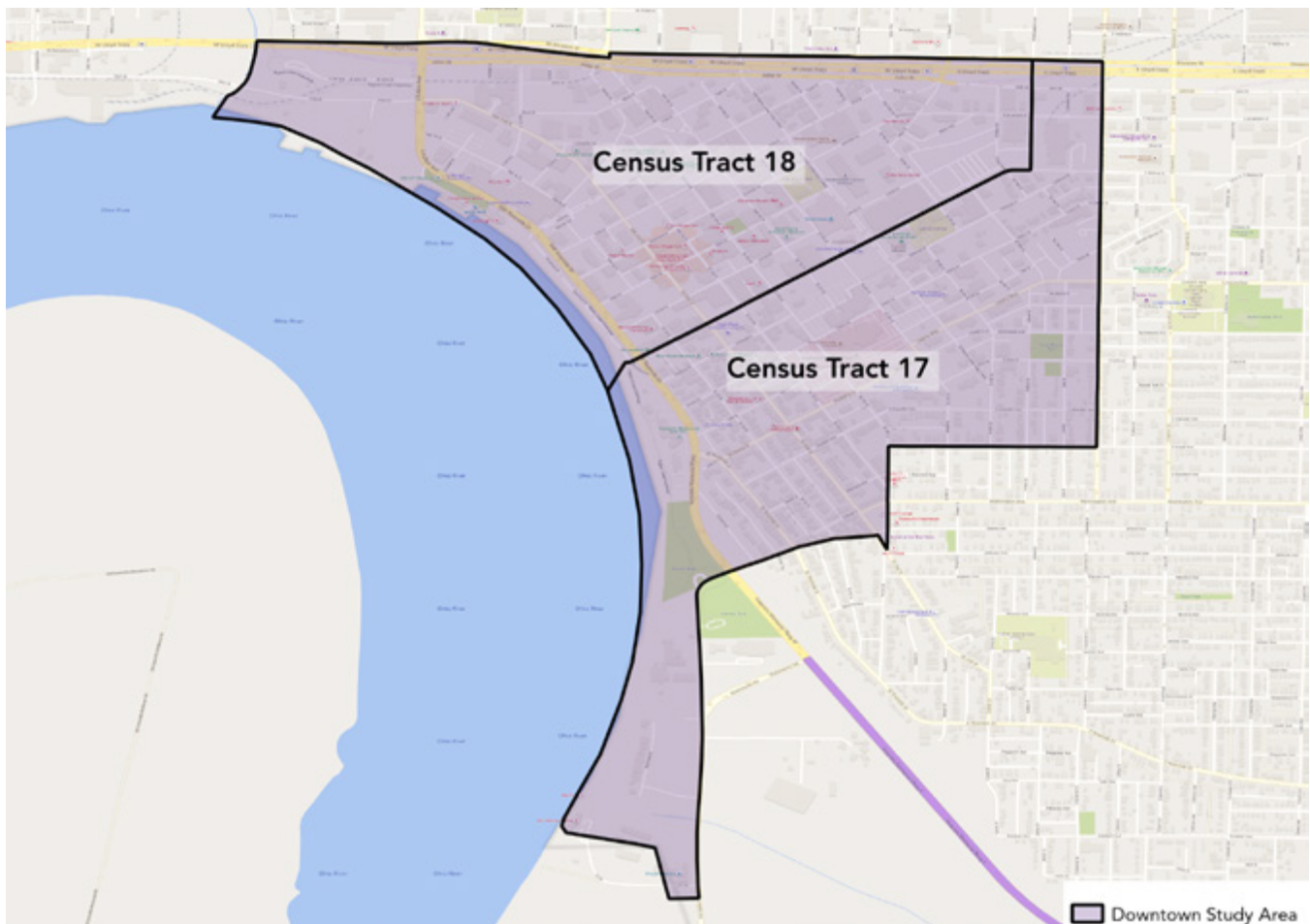
Employment Population 2018





	Downtown	City	Region
Primary Jobs	17,875	89,436	145,208
Share of Jobs	n/a	20%	12%
Employees Per square Mile	14,652	1,890	99
Primary Jobs Growth 2010-2018	-0.6%	0%	3%
Private Jobs Growth 2010-2018	-8%	0%	5%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

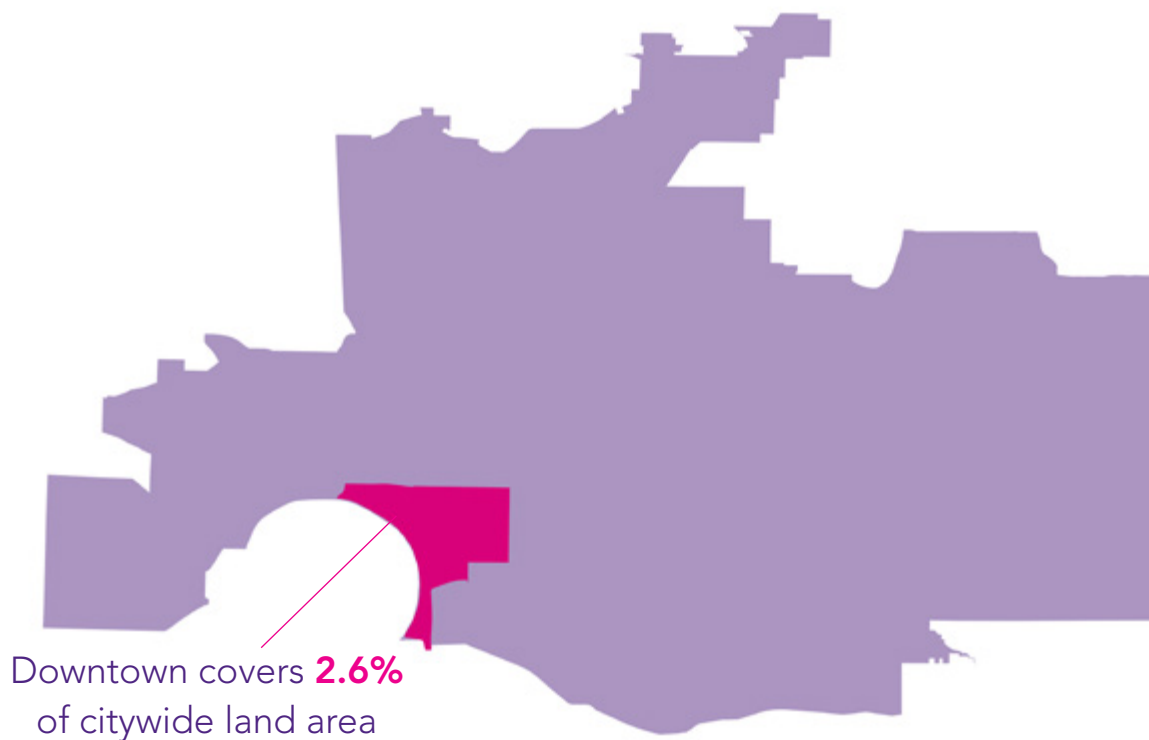
Downtown Study Area

The study area includes Census Tracts 17 and 18, as illustrated on the map below. This extends beyond the boundaries of the Downtown Evansville Economic Improvement District, as geographic parameters vary across data sources and don't typically align with boundaries designated by the local partner organization. IDA recommends using the commonly understood definition of study downtowns and matching boundaries to hard edges, roads, water, natural features or highways. IDA worked with each group in this analysis to align its study area with census tract boundaries for ease of incorporating publicly available data from the U.S. Census. The city referred to in this study is the City of Evansville, and the region is the Evansville, IN-KY Metro Area, which consists of four counties (Vanderburgh, Henderson, Posey, and Warrick).



Inventory	Downtown	Share of City	Per Square Mile
 OFFICE (SF)	3.4M	n/a	2.8M
 RETAIL (SF)	148K	n/a	121,311
 RESIDENTIAL UNITS	1,713	2.9%	1,404
 HOTEL (ROOMS)	730	24%	598

Source: Development Strategies Market Analysis (2019), American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)



Economy | Impact, Innovation

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

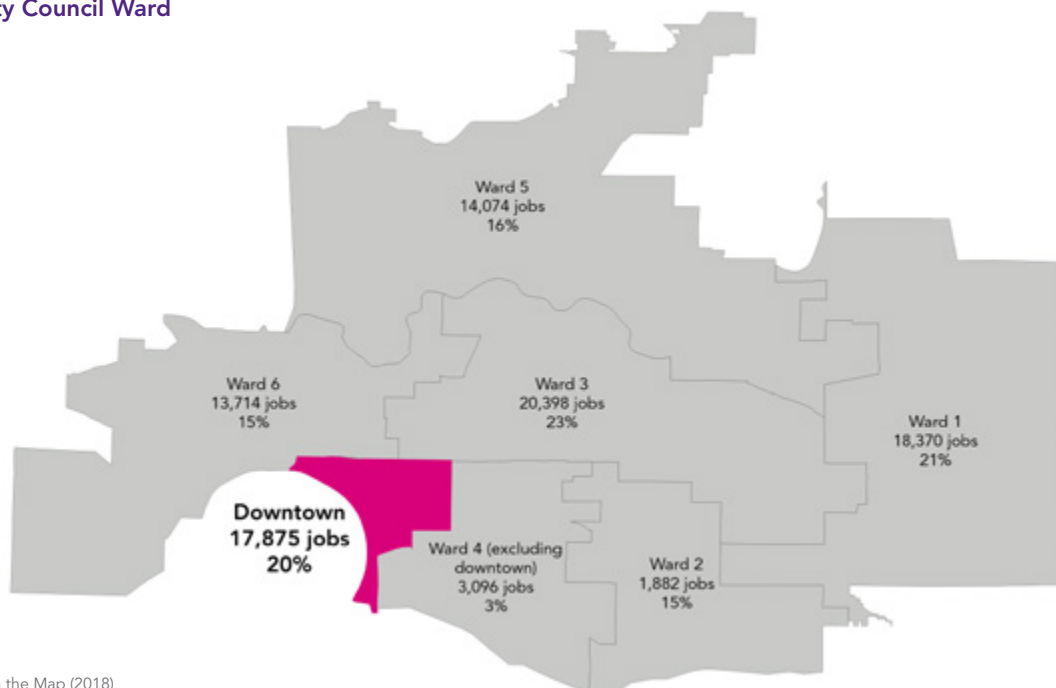
While downtowns and center cities constitute a small share of citywide land area, there's no understating their regional economic importance. As traditional centers of commerce, transportation, education, and government, downtowns serve as economic anchors for their cities and regions. Thanks to highly concentrated economic activity, investment in the center city yields a high level of return per dollar. Urban centers across the U.S. were the first areas to recover from the Great Recession, and although the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic still reverberates, 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

No other part of Evansville features as high a concentration of jobs as in downtown. Home to 20% of the city's jobs, downtown is the clear economic driver of the city.

The largest sectors downtown include public administration, management of companies and enterprises, and construction. Public administration jobs alone make up 15% of all downtown jobs, with nearly all the city's workforce having offices downtown. Of the fastest growing knowledge industry jobs, which collectively make up 3,600 jobs or about 20% of jobs downtown, management of companies and enterprises and professional, scientific, and technical services jobs both grew by 15% between 2010 and 2018. As a general note, we're omitting educational services from this list since it primarily includes jobs associated with the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, whose jobs are located at schools throughout the county but attributed to a single downtown address.

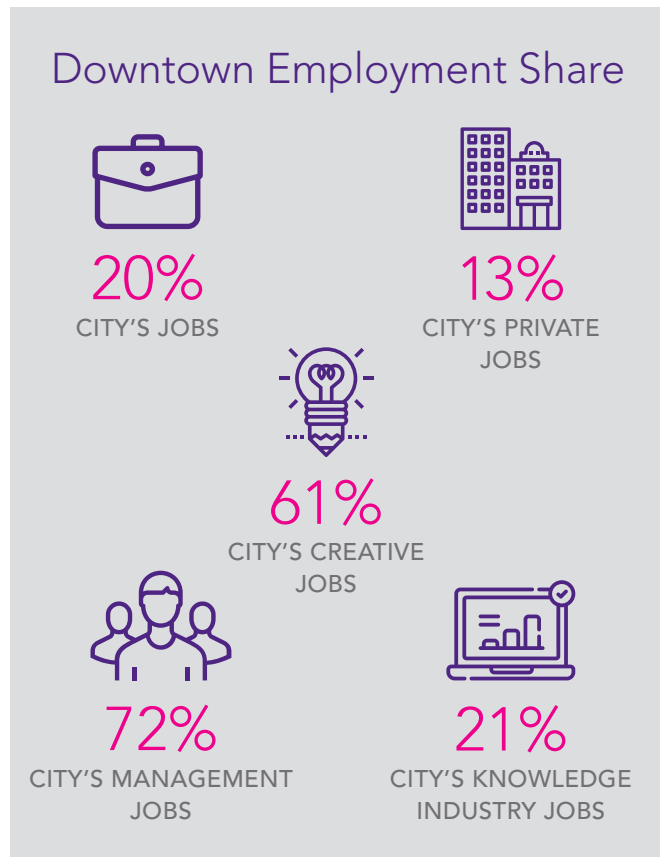
Jobs by City Council Ward



Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

Downtown is also home to 61% of the city's arts, entertainment, and recreation jobs, with nearly 1,000 jobs attributed to this sector. This includes performing arts, musicians, museums, and probably most significantly for Evansville, gambling, due to the Bally's Evansville (formerly Tropicana Evansville) casino. Not only is a significant portion of citywide jobs in this industry, but this also represents 44% of these jobs in the entire metro area, of which downtown is only 0.1% of the land area. This is a clear indication that downtown is a regional destination for entertainment and cultural experiences.

While many sectors continue to outperform in downtown, Evansville has seen a slow decline in the overall number of jobs downtown since the beginning of the Millennium, from approximately 21,200 jobs in 2002 to nearly 17,900 in 2019. This trend is not uncommon among downtowns of similar scale as jobs in the United States continue to concentrate in larger cities. This trend was further compounded by the Great Recession. Of the 3,300 jobs lost in Evansville, around 1,000 jobs were attributed to the finance and insurance sector. The health care, information, and retail trade sectors also each lost approximately 500 jobs.



Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

Knowledge Industry Employment Growth 2010-2018

Finance, Insurance,
Real Estate and
Rental and Leasing



Management of
Companies
and Enterprises



Professional,
Scientific, and
Technical Services



Information



Health Care and
Social Assistance

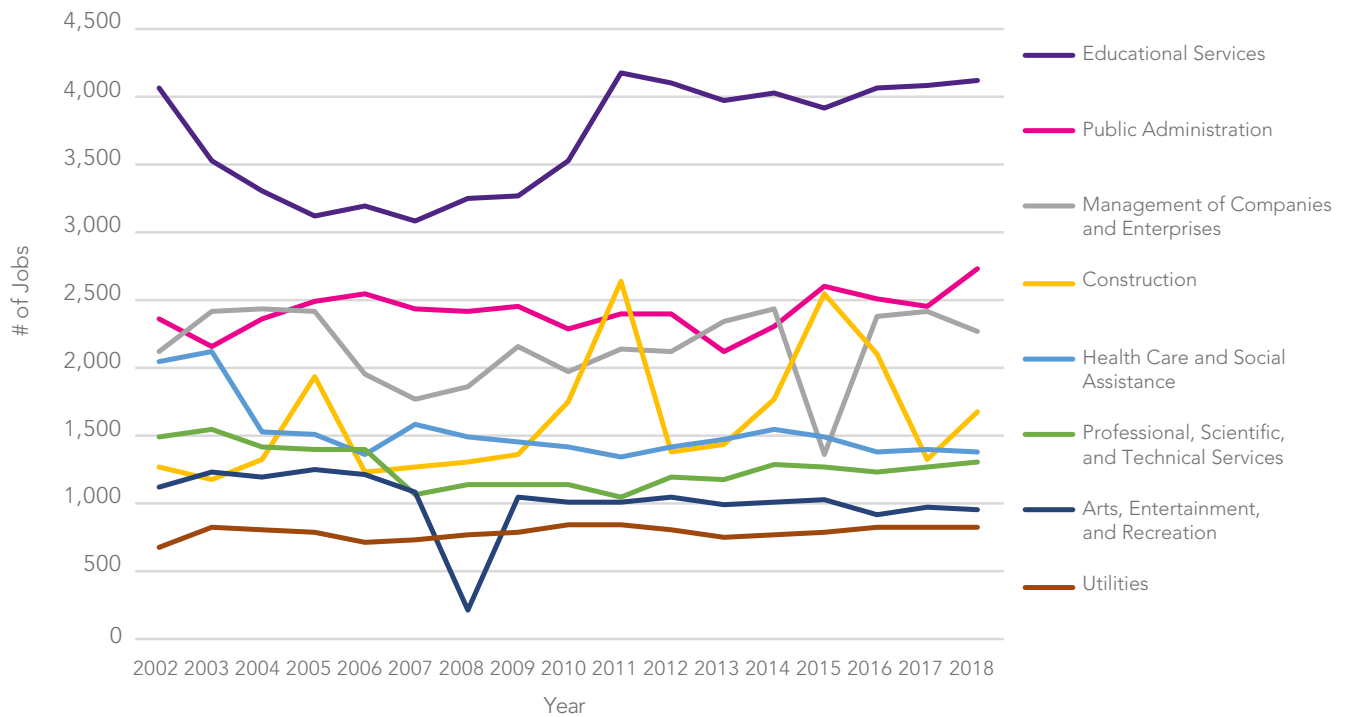


Total
Knowledge Job
Change

	Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	Management of Companies and Enterprises	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Information	Health Care and Social Assistance	Total Knowledge Job Change
Downtown	-47%	15%	15%	-52%	-2%	-8%
City	-6%	17%	23%	-43%	3%	2%
Region	-7%	5%	15%	-37%	5%	1%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2010 and 2018)

Job Change in Top 8 Industries Downtown



Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)



Small Businesses and 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.¹

Relative to other cities of its size, Evansville does not have a particularly strong presence of small businesses or startups. Citywide, only 13% of all jobs is at firms with fewer than 20 employees while 87% of all jobs are at businesses that are at least 11 years old. While downtown tracks closely with these figures, in fact an even smaller share of downtown businesses is small or new, and this share has only decreased over the past decade. Since 2011, downtown has lost 6% of jobs at

firms smaller than 20 people as the city experienced 3% growth. Based on this data, it does not appear small or new firms are a large part of downtown's business ecosystem.

Despite this broader trend, downtown is making smaller but still significant gains. Located in the heart of downtown, Innovation Pointe is one of a few coworking spaces located downtown that offer affordable workspaces, facilitate beneficial collaborations and provide access to small business resources for entrepreneurs to start and thrive in the Evansville region. While small in number, spaces like these complement the nearby universities and are growing the presence of entrepreneurs downtown.



Jobs by Firm Size

	Downtown	City	Region
< 20 PEOPLE	11%	13%	16%
20-249 PEOPLE	21%	25%	26%
> 249 PEOPLE	68%	62%	58%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2017)



Jobs by Firm Age

	Downtown	City	Region
< 3 YEARS (2015–2018)	4%	6%	5%
4-10 YEARS	6%	8%	9%
11+ YEARS	90%	87%	86%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2017)

Fiscal Impact

With fewer than 2% of all workers also living within the study area, downtown draws almost all its workers from across the region, serving as an economic engine for nearby counties. Approximately 63% of downtown workers live within Vanderburgh County, while another 37%—or at least 6,500 workers—commute from other counties within the region. 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 regional economy, with downtown jobs generating 12% of Vanderburgh County's private sector employee earnings. Since these figures do not include government workers,

which comprise downtown's largest industry, the share of pay attributed to downtown workers is likely even higher. Average wages downtown also exceed those elsewhere in the city and county.

Thanks to the density of jobs and property, downtown produces a major fiscal benefit for Vanderburgh County. Although downtown only makes up 1.2% of the city's land area, the average square mile of downtown carries a value 3.6 times higher than elsewhere in the city and 10 times higher than the remainder of the county. The total assessed value of land downtown—\$638 million in 2021—represents 10% of the entire assessed value of the city of Evansville.



Jobs by Earnings

	Downtown ZIP 47708 / 47713	County	Region
Downtown % of Total Annual Payroll	n/a	12%	9%
Average Employee Wage	\$45k	\$44k	\$45k

Source: U.S. Census Annual Business Survey (2018)

Downtown's place at the epicenter of the regional economy of Evansville underscores the important role that organizations like the Downtown Evansville Economic Improvement District play in creating and sustaining a healthy local economy. The EID builds a more active and inclusive downtown by focusing on programs that contribute to the cleanliness, safety and beautification of downtown as well as hosting events and recruiting businesses to the area. This kind of block-level support is critical to preserving not only the fiscal health of the city, but also the prosperity of the entire region of Southern Indiana.

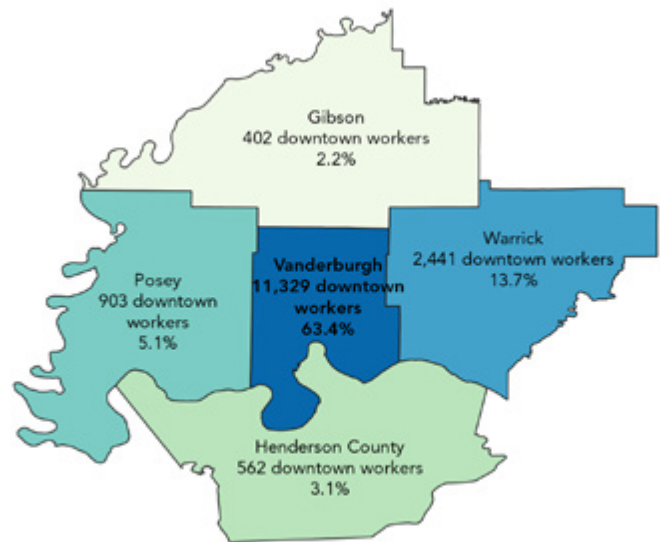


Land Value and Assessment

	Downtown	City	Region
ASSESSED VALUE	\$638M	\$7.02B	\$12.4B
LAND AREA IN SQUARE MILES	1.2	47.3	1,464
VALUE PER SQUARE MILE	\$532M	\$148M	\$8.45M

Source: Vanderburgh County (2021)

Number of Regional Residents Who Work Downtown



Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

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.

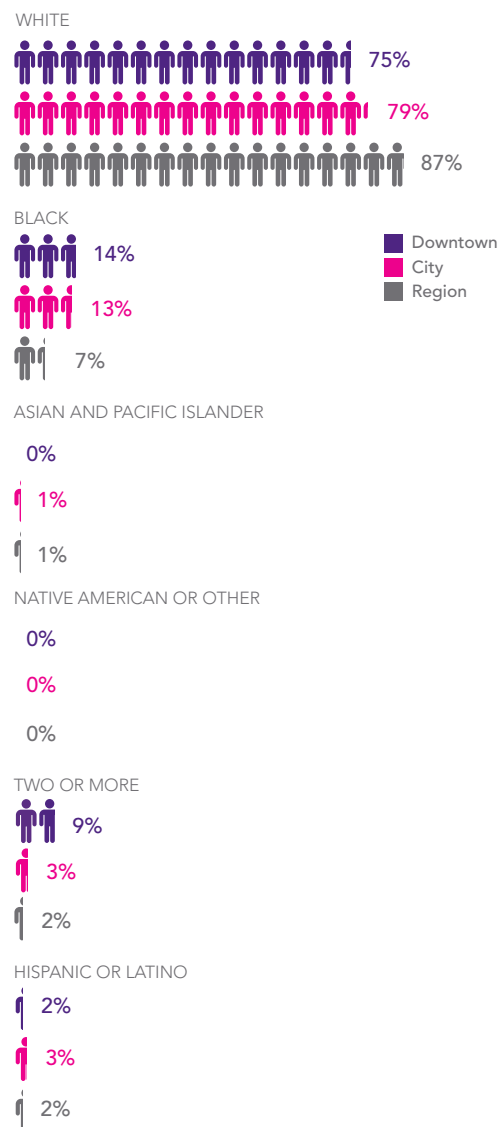
“Inclusive spaces in the public realm, particularly in our cities’ downtowns, can help break down the social barriers that often divide us. Thriving downtown districts and public spaces **promote** not only **economic prosperity**, but also **social cohesion**.²”

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

Racial Diversity

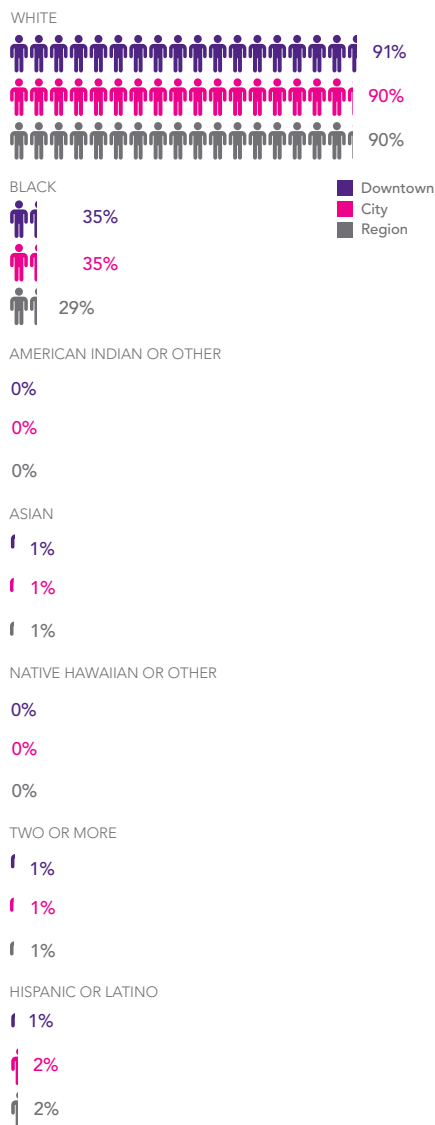
Located in a region where nearly 9 out of 10 residents is White, downtown Evansville maintains slightly more diversity thanks to a population made up of 14% Black and 9% multiracial individuals. Its Diversity Index score is 48, which indicates a 48% chance that any two random people within a given area downtown identify as different races or ethnicities. Downtown is also more diverse than the city, which scores a 39 on the Diversity Index, and is becoming even more diverse as a result of a threefold increase in the number of multiracial residents since 2017. Despite these gains, downtown’s Black population has dropped sharply from 772 residents in 2014 to 361 residents in 2019, cutting in half the size of a population that has maintained its numbers across the city and region.

Residents By Race



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Employment By Race

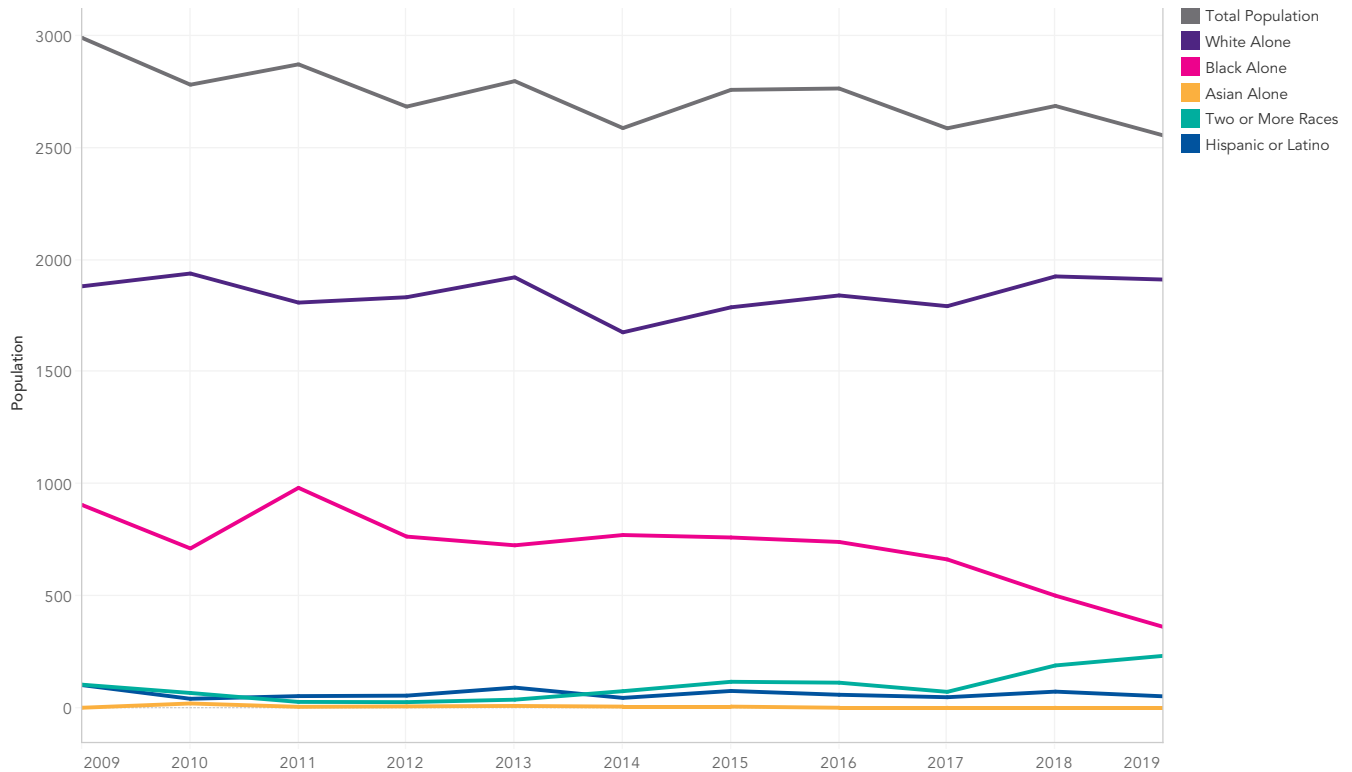


Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

Compared to residents, downtown's workforce more closely mimics the racial demographics of the region, with more than 90% of workers identifying as White. As noted in the Economy section, downtown draws almost all its workers from throughout the region, so it should come as no surprise that the racial composition of downtown's daytime population should look more like the residential population of greater Evansville.

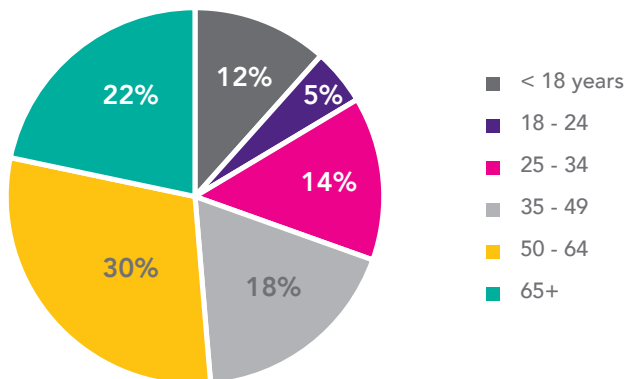


Population Change by Race and Ethnicity

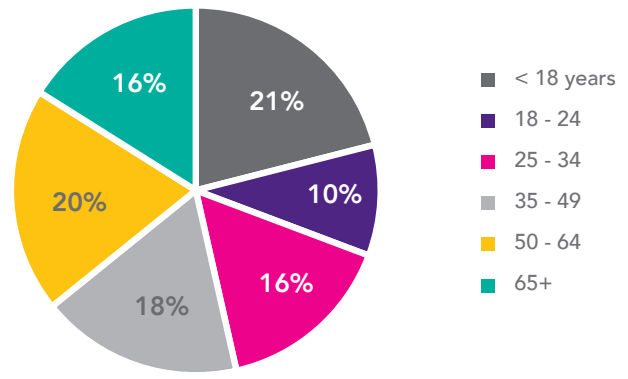


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019)

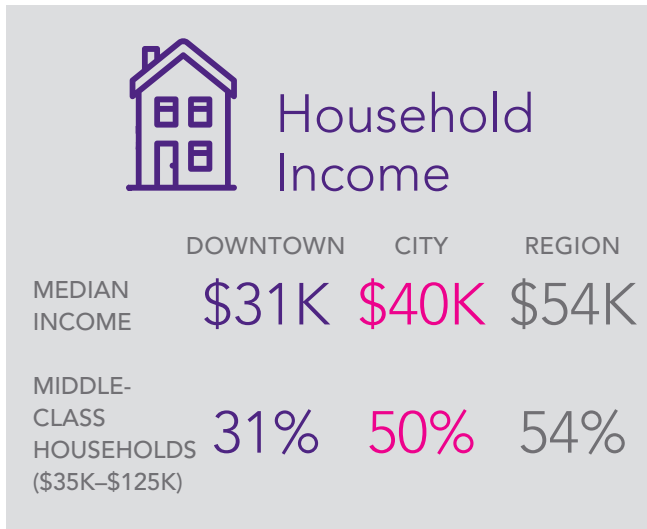
Downtown Age Diversity



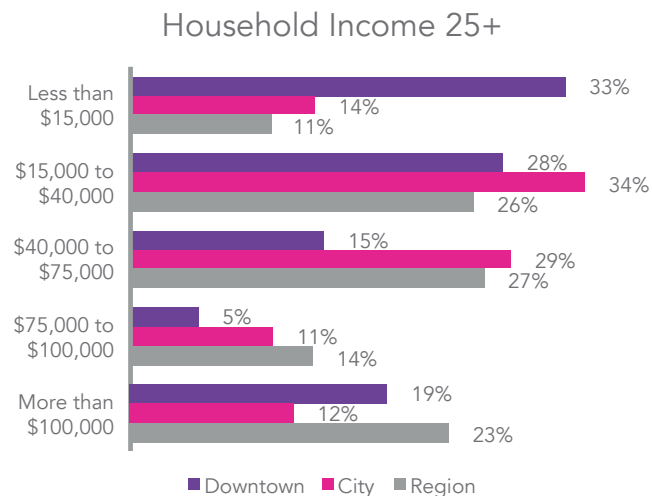
City Age Diversity



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019)



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Age Diversity

Evansville's downtown skews considerably older than downtowns in other cities. More than half of downtown Evansville residents are over the age of 50. Elsewhere in the city, the share of residents over 50 years old is 36%. The share of adults between 18-24 years old—just 5% downtown—is also smaller than the citywide average and the typical size of the college-aged population in other cities. These trends have held since at least 2009, as far back as this report's dataset goes, indicating that downtown has historically been home to an older population.

Socioeconomics

Downtown is notably less affluent than other areas of Evansville, with only 31% of the population meeting the definition of a middle-class household (\$35,000–\$125,000). However, data show that household income varies greatly across different parts of downtown. While the median household income across the entire study area is \$30,529, median household income is nearly three times this amount in Census Tract 18 north of Walnut Street, where it tops \$86,000, greatly exceeding the average wealth of the city or the region. Within Census Tract 17, median household income varies by as much as \$35,000 between Block Group 1, located southwest of Select Specialty Hospital – Evansville, and Block Group 2 northeast of the hospital.

Even though more than 60% of downtown residents still earn less than \$40,000 per year, this share has declined 20% since 2009. At the same time, residents earning more than \$100,000 now make up 19% of downtown's population, an increase of 140% since 2009. With wealthier downtown residents consolidating around the more active Main Street corridor, downtown appears to be becoming a tale of two—or even three—distinct subdistricts. Meanwhile, just blocks away in other parts of downtown, many residents are living below the poverty threshold.



Jobs by Educational Attainment

HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS



37% 43% 44%

SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE



34% 34% 34%

BACHELOR'S OR ADVANCED DEGREES

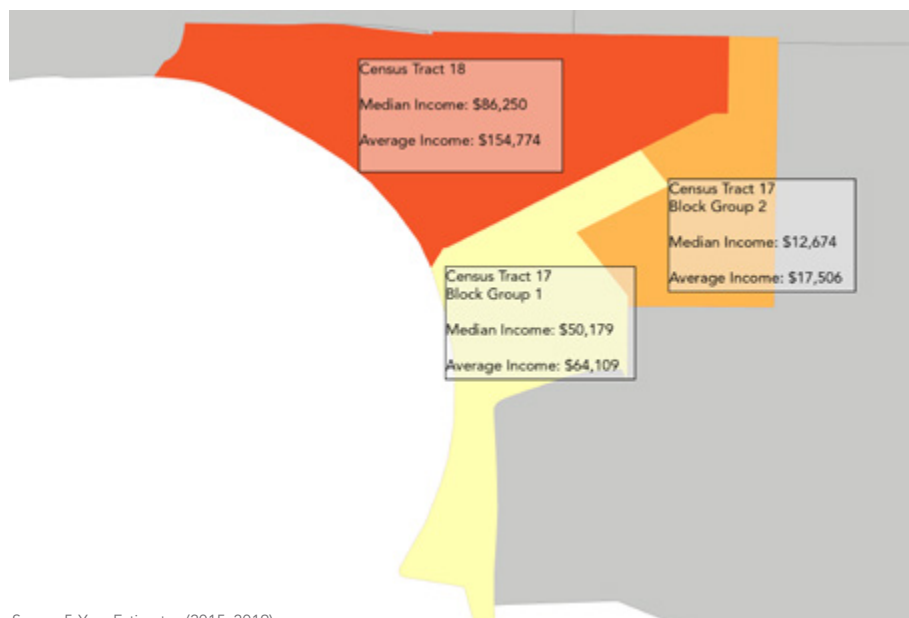


29% 23% 22%

■ Downtown ■ City ■ Region

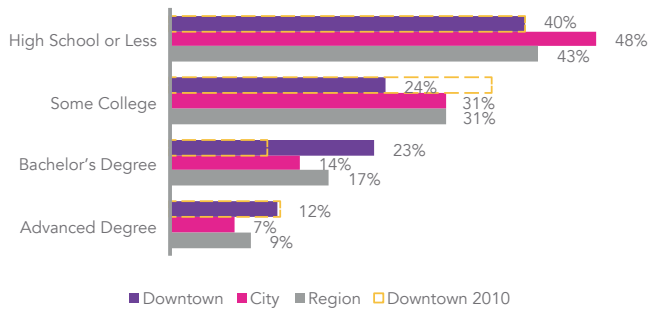
Source: LEHD On the Map (2018)

Median Average Income Downtown



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Educational Attainment for Residents 25+



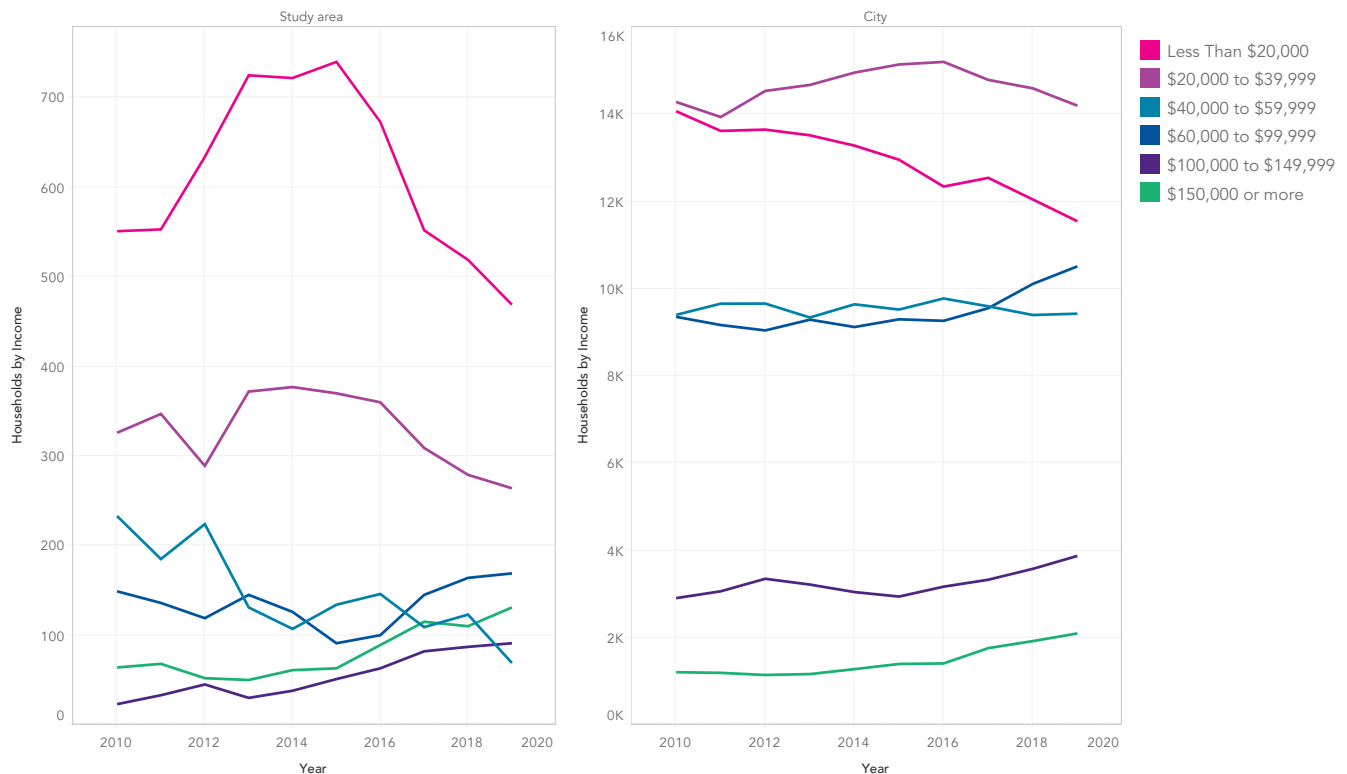
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Economic Inclusion

Residents of downtown Evansville are becoming more educated, with a higher proportion of residents holding a bachelor's or advanced degree than those living in the city or the region. Since 2010, there has been a 130% increase in the total share of downtown residents having a bachelor's degree, and today 35% of residents hold a bachelor's or advanced degree. Meanwhile, the percentage of residents having only some college experience or an associate's degree has declined by 27%.

Among downtown workers, the share of people holding a bachelor's or advanced degree is 29%, indicating that workers are less educated than residents of downtown. However, despite the fact that 70% of workers do not hold a degree from a four-year institution, the downtown workforce is still more educated than the citywide or regional workforce, where a lower proportion of workers holds either a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Household Income Over Time



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2005–2009) to (2015–2019)

Housing and Affordability

Compared to the rest of Evansville, downtown is an affordable place to live where the average household spends 41% of their income—or at least 10% less than those in the city or the region—on the combined costs of housing and transportation. The median gross rent downtown is \$589, although this figure varies significantly within the study area and is as high as \$871 in the area around Main Street in Census Tract 18. Rent also increased at a rate of 16% in the decade between 2010 and 2019, which is slower than the city or the region where rent is increasing by more than 20%. This is an indication that even as rents in portions of downtown exceed averages throughout the region, as a whole downtown rent isn't growing disproportionately expensive.

Like many cities, it is far more costly to own a home downtown than it is elsewhere in Evansville, with downtown home prices more than double the citywide average. Prices are increasing at a much faster pace too, rising 74% in the decade between 2010 and 2019 relative to a 5% increase in the city and a 22% increase regionally. While this is a positive indication that downtown is a desirable place to live within Evansville, higher prices also contribute to a greater number of households who are housing burdened, defined as paying more than 30% of income on housing. Based on this definition, 42% of all households downtown are technically housing burdened, a rate 9% greater than those owning homes in the city and 18% greater than those in the region. Compared to other cities, downtown Evansville has a relatively high proportion of home ownership, and downtown's homeowners are more diverse, with 27% non-White homeowners.

Housing and Transportation Index

Downtown	City	Region
41%	48%	52%

Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) Housing and Transportation Index (2017)

Renters

	Downtown	City	Region
% RESIDENTS WHO RENT	61%	44%	31%
MEDIAN GROSS RENT	\$589	\$774	\$773
MEDIAN RENT INCREASE 2010–2019	16%	21%	23%
RENT-BURDENED	48%	48%	44%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Homeowners

	Downtown	City	Region
% RESIDENTS WHO OWN	39%	56%	69%
MEDIAN HOME PRICE	\$222K	\$94K	\$139K
MEDIAN PRICE CHANGE 2010–2019	74%	5%	22%
HOUSING-BURDENED	42%	33%	24%
WHITE HOMEOWNERS	73%	90%	93%
NON-WHITE HOMEOWNERS	27%	10%	7%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Vibrancy | Spending, Fun

Due to their expansive base of users, 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.”³ Physical distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic have only emphasized the value of a vibrant downtown with restaurants, concerts, outdoor events, and festivals. The recovery of storefront businesses, event venues, and hotels post-pandemic will play an essential role in restoring a sense of vibrancy and normalcy.

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. Evansville’s population growth has been flat; the city grew at a rate of 1% between 2010 and 2019 as the region’s population contracted 12%. Downtown’s population trajectory more closely aligns with the trends unfolding regionally, with downtown losing 8% of its residents over a decade. While this overall trend seems indicative of an environment in which the city is doing a better job of welcoming new residents than downtown, the situation is more nuanced. Around Main Street in Census Tract 18, the residential population increased three-fold, with a gain of 400 residents in the past decade. Meanwhile, the area south of Walnut Street in Census Tract 17 saw its population decline by 28% in the same period, sustaining a loss of about 700 residents.

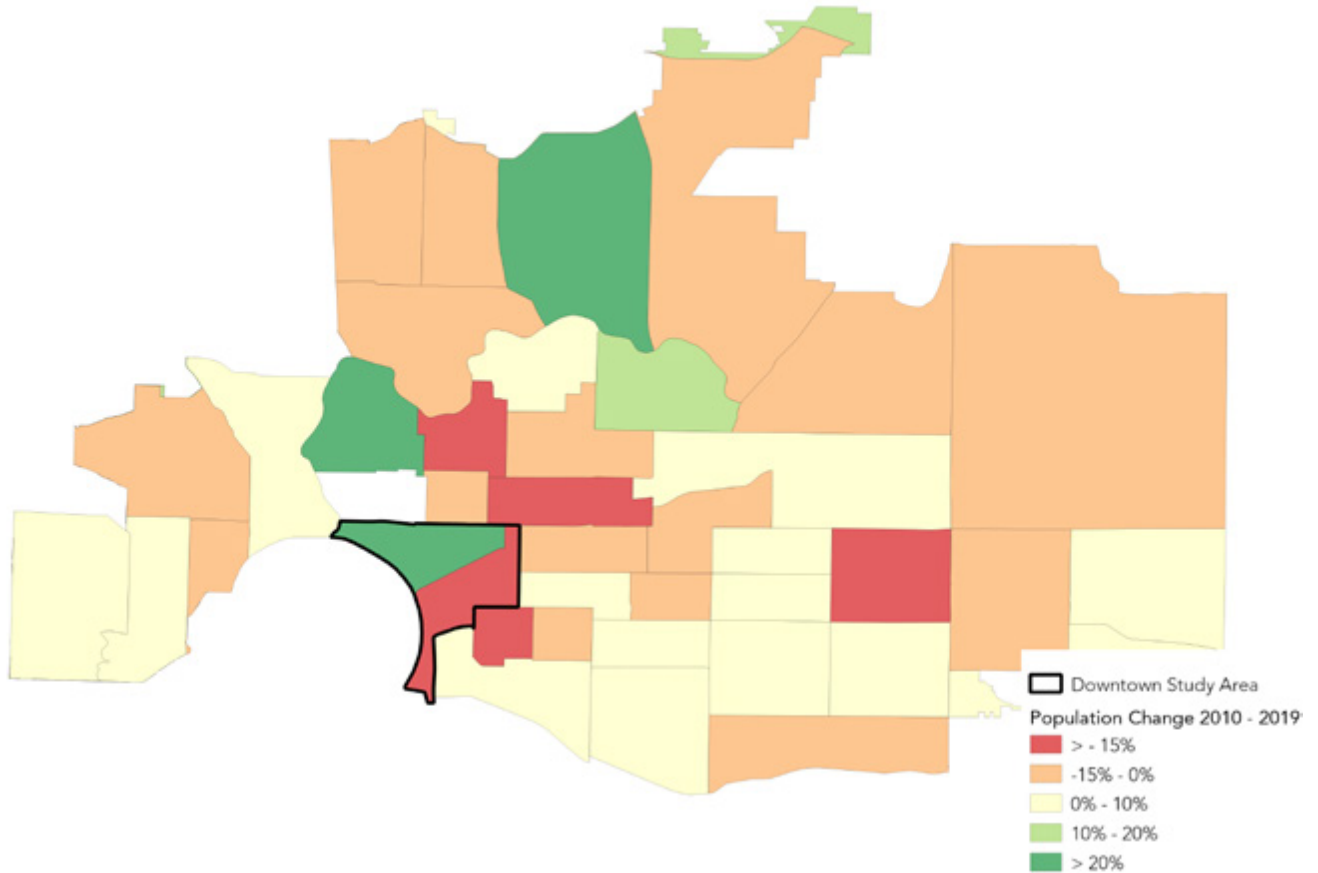
These block-level shifts are accompanied by similar changes in the economic and racial makeup of downtown. As we previously shared in this report, the median household income in Census Tract 17 is less than half the median household income in Census Tract 18. Meanwhile, downtown lost more than half of its Black population between 2010 and 2019, with most of these losses sustained in Census Tract 17.

Despite the overall loss in the number of residents living downtown, housing inventory within the study area actually grew at a rate of 9%, which is significantly greater than the inventory growth rate citywide or regionally. Again, this growth can be attributed to development interest in the area surrounding Main Street in Census Tract 18, where 300 more units are either currently under construction or in the pipeline. This is further indication that, depending on where you live, downtown is either a vibrant and growing place or a district that is shrinking in size.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Population Change in Evansville, 2010 to 2019



Source: American Community Survey (2015–2019)



Retail Sales



DOWNTOWN RETAIL SALES

\$76 Million

SHARE OF CITY

2.4%

RETAIL SALES PER SQUARE MILE

\$63 Million

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Marketplace Data (2017); ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2019)

All Retail

TOTAL RETAIL BUSINESSES



Downtown

71

City

1,349

NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS AND BARS



34

402

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Marketplace Data (2017); ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2019)

Downtown Retail Real Estate



SQUARE FEET OF RETAIL **148,000**

RENT PER SQUARE FOOT **\$14–\$20**

INVENTORY PER SQUARE MILE **121,131**

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Marketplace Data (2017); ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2019)

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 similar-sized cities, downtown Evansville's retail sector lacks a strong presence and is outperformed by the city according to every metric analyzed for this report. Downtown averages \$76 million in annual retail sales, which represents just 2.4% of citywide retail sales, a low percentage compared to an average share of 11% reported among IDA's study downtowns. Restaurants and bars also have an outsized presence downtown, accounting for roughly half of all retail businesses and annual retail sales figures. Furthermore, only 74 jobs in the retail sector are counted downtown out of more than 9,000 retail jobs citywide.

In an encouraging sign, data indicate that the few retailers that exist within the study area still provide a draw to downtown. In fact, about half of all retail sales are to non-residents, an indication that downtown serves both its residents and attracts visitors from the city and region.

Downtown is a center of activity for Evansville, drawing attendees from throughout the region. The Ford Center is the region's center for sports, concerts, and other



entertainment, hosting the University of Evansville basketball team, a local hockey team, and large community events. Evansville's convention center, Old National Events Plaza, hosts an average of 19 conventions per year as well as concerts year-round. And the Victory Theatre also brings in more than 220,000 visitors annually for concerts, dance, and theater. The largest draw downtown is the Bally's Evansville casino, which brings in more than 1.3 million visitors annually. Despite the pandemic, the casino has been able to maintain this level of visitorship since 2020, providing a continued draw to downtown and benefitting other nearby businesses that depend on this critical foot traffic.

Because of the large presence of live events and entertainment, downtown is also home to a significant share of the city's hotel rooms. Four of the city's 32 hotels are located downtown, accounting for roughly one in every four hotel rooms citywide. This includes the new Hyatt Place, which opened in June 2021, bringing an additional 139 rooms to downtown. This kind of presence from hotel operators is on par with downtowns of a similar scale nationwide and illustrates how downtown's attractions support overnight tourism.

Annual Visitor Attendance (2018 or 2019)

BALLY'S CASINO	1,320,000
FORD CENTER	475,000
CONVENTION CENTER	300,000
VICTORY THEATER	220,000
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	90,000
EVANSVILLE MUSEUM	55,000
FIREWORKS	40,000
FESTIVALS/RUNS	10,000

Source: Downtown Evansville EID (2019)



Hotels

	DOWNTOWN	CITY	REGION
HOTELS	4	32	39
HOTEL ROOMS	730	3,039	3,701
VISITORS	2.5M	n/a	n/a
AVERAGE DAILY VISITORS	6,877	n/a	n/a

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Marketplace Data (2017); ESRI Business Analyst Business Total Data (2019)

2020 District Events and Activities



5
VENUES WITH LIVE
ENTERTAINMENT

1
SPORTS
STADIUM

3
TOTAL GYMS AND
FITNESS STUDIOS

2
TOTAL FARMERS
MARKET

19
TOTAL
CONVENTIONS

5
TOTAL ANNUAL
FESTIVALS/PARADES
(WITH MORE THAN 1,000
ATTENDEES)

Source: Evansville Convention Bureau (2020)

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.”⁴ 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

Situated along an oxbow on the Ohio River, Evansville is an industrial city whose manufacturing history is memorialized by historic buildings and street names in and near its downtown. At times known as the nation’s builder of everything from furniture to refrigerators to P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft during World War II, the 209-year-old city is getting a fresh look after 50 years of decline as downtowns across the globe reassert themselves as centers for living, working, and leisure.

Downtown’s resurgence can be traced to the turn of the Millennium. In 2004, the city instituted a loft incentive program, offering grants up to \$20,000 per unit for developers to convert vacant buildings dotting downtown streets into housing. Since then, through various incentive programs, the city has provided incentives resulting in the adaptive development, or renovation and return to active use, of dozens of units of rental and condominium units.⁵ More recently in 2020, Evansville welcomed the opening of a 144-unit apartment building called Post House, the first ground-up construction of living units downtown in almost 40 years.

Evansville has also ushered in a wave of investments that have helped propel downtown’s image as an entertainment destination. In 2011, city leaders cut the ribbon on the Ford Center, a brand new, 11,000-seat arena that serves as the home of NCAA Division I sporting events for the University of Evansville in addition to hosting concerts, conventions, rodeos, and other gatherings. In 2017, owners of the Bally’s Evansville expanded the former riverboat casino into a land-based casino and entertainment complex, complete with a 45,000 square feet casino floor with four dining venues, 400 hotel rooms, and more than 20,000 square feet of adjoining convention space. The casino has continued to sustain more than one million visitors each year, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Media



INSTAGRAM POSTS WITH HASHTAG
#DOWNTOWNEVANSVILLE

14,874

TWITTER FOLLOWERS

2,506

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

22,499

As of August 27, 2021

Downtown is also home to several cultural institutions that help Evansville stand out as a year-round tourist destination. With roots in the early 20th Century, the Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science anchors a museum district that also includes the Children's Museum of Evansville, the USS LST Ship Memorial, Reitz Home Museum, and the nearby Evansville African American Museum. Together, these museums welcome more than 150,000 annual visitors to a stretch of the riverfront extending up Main Street. Evansville is also home to the Victory Theatre—a 100-year-old vaudeville theater that has been repurposed as the home of the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra in addition to a variety of touring acts.

Downtown Evansville boasts 238 designated historic structures, 32 public art installations, and three parks and natural areas, in addition to several festivals and other large-scale events that attract tens of thousands of attendees each year. Evansville's largest one-day event is Fireworks on the Ohio, a Fourth of July fireworks display taking place along the riverfront. Downtown also hosts a farmers market—Market on Main—during the summer months, attracting farmers and vendors from throughout the region. More than 35,000 people attended events sponsored by the Downtown Evansville Economic Improvement District in 2019.

Destinations and Unique Features



302

HISTORIC
STRUCTURES



32

PUBLIC ART
INSTALLATIONS



3

PARKS AND
NATURAL AREAS



4

MUSEUMS

Source: Evansville EID (2021)



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 everyone's minds. On the economic side, downtowns and their cities demonstrated a remarkable ability at the start of the pandemic to mobilize quickly and offer economic relief. Over the longer term, downtowns have proven they can bounce back quickly from economic downturns. Social resilience means that residents have sufficient access to essential health services and healthcare providers, but also that strong community support enables community residents and businesses alike to depend upon each other for support. The green spaces and trails that contribute to environmental resilience took on added importance as safe outdoor respites during the pandemic. Each of these elements illustrates how downtown boosts holistic resilience in the community and the larger city.

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

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. Like many communities, the Great Recession was a major disruptive event that impacted multiple employment sectors in Evansville and serves as a good litmus test for how downtown, the city, and the region might fare under similar economic stressors.

Recession Impact and Recovery

	Downtown	City	Region
JOB GROWTH YEAR OVER YEAR 2009–2010	0%	2%	1%
JOB GROWTH YEAR OVER YEAR 2010–2011	8%	-3%	-1%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2009–2011)

Downtown Community Resources



1

LIBRARY



2

RECREATION AND
COMMUNITY
CENTERS



14

RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTIONS



3

PARKS AND
NATURAL AREAS



4

POSTSECONDARY
INSTITUTIONS



1

PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY
SCHOOL

Source: Evansville EID (2021)

Job growth was stagnant during the depths of the Recession in 2009 and 2010, but picked up in the following two years for a growth rate of 8%, greatly exceeding job growth in the city or the region. Although the long-term impacts of increased remote work remain to be seen, we expect the post-pandemic recovery to follow a similar path, led by downtown job growth. In addition, the higher levels of educational attainment among downtown residents better equip them to adapt to changing economic conditions, while the relatively high median household income in parts of downtown should help shelter many residents from economic uncertainty.

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 three parks and natural areas, a library, two recreation and community centers, and fourteen places of worship, Downtown Evansville's residents, employees, and visitors can meet, learn, and participate in civic life in multiple places. Downtown is also home to Signature School, a uniquely downtown high school that is among the best-ranked high schools in the country.

Social resilience in downtown also means having a healthy population, particularly in a public health crisis. Downtown Evansville residents, however, don't fare as well on key health indicators. At 68 years old, downtown life expectancy is far below the citywide average of 76 years old and the national average of 79 years old. This discrepancy is largely correlated to the stark income disparity that exists downtown between Census Tracts 17 and 18. Similarly, downtown is home to a slightly higher share of residents who lack health insurance coverage—12%—but has a similar share of residents who do not take part in any leisure-time physical activity.

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. About one in four downtown households lives without a computer at home, and while fewer households lack internet access, the share of those living without adequate access to basic technology is still greater downtown than it is in the city. Additionally, 31%—or roughly one in three downtown residents—is facing poverty, 9% more than those living elsewhere in Evansville.

Access to Economic Opportunity

	Downtown	City
RESIDENTS IN POVERTY	31%	22%
HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A COMPUTER	23%	13%
HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS	15%	10%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019)



Health

	DOWNTOWN	CITY
AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY	68	76
NO LEISURE-TIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	31%	32%
WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE	12%	10%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019); CDC (2018)

Environmental Resilience

A downtown's environmental resilience plays a major role in assuring long-term sustainability in its region. By every environmental measure consulted for this report, downtown Evansville fares better than the city. Residents of downtown generate fewer greenhouse gases per household, with roughly one in five residents choosing an alternate mode of transportation to get to and from work. After several years where the share of downtown residents driving alone increased slowly over time, since 2017 this share has decreased sharply by nearly 10%, indicating that there has

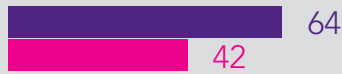
Environmental Resilience



	DOWNTOWN	CITY	REGION
ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING POINTS	8	-	-
ACRES OF OPEN SPACE	4	-	-
ANNUAL TONS OF GHG EMITTED PER HOUSEHOLD	5	8	9

Source: CNT (2017), Evansville EID (2021)

Walk, Bike and Transit Scores



Source: Walk Score (2021)

been a recent shift away from car commuting. Still, with nearly 80% of downtown residents choosing to drive, Evansville is still underperforming when compared to other study cities, where fewer than 70% of downtown residents typically drive.

While Evansville is a car-dependent city, downtown has a Walk Score of 64, indicating that some errands can be accomplished without a car. Even though bike usage is low citywide, downtown boasts a Bike Score that is 14 points higher than the city's Bike Score. By continuing to invest in infrastructure improvements and advocating for developments that bring amenities closer to where downtown residents live, Evansville's leaders can accelerate the clear shift that is underway toward transportation alternatives, reducing car dependency and supporting a greener lifestyle.

Downtown Commuting Patterns

BIKE



Downtown	City	Region
0%	0%	0%

TRANSIT



Downtown	City	Region
6%	3%	1%

CARPPOOL



Downtown	City	Region
3%	8%	7%

WALK



Downtown	City	Region
11%	3%	2%

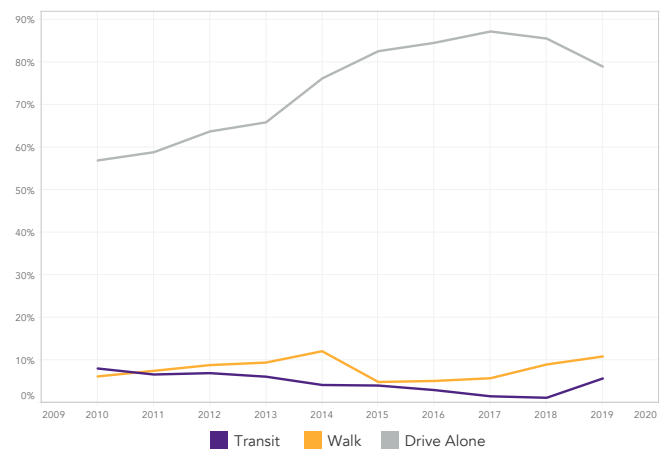
DRIVE ALONE



Downtown	City	Region
79%	85%	89%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (2015–2019)

Sustainable Commute by Mode



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates from 2009–2019

Downtown Profile | Summary

Home to 20% of the city's jobs, downtown Evansville is the largest jobs center in the entire region. It has a majority of the city's creative and management jobs, including 61% of the city's arts, entertainment, and recreation jobs and nearly all of the city's public administration jobs. Even as the job market consolidates in Evansville and companies choose to relocate many of their jobs to larger American cities, the city's knowledge industry jobs, which collectively make up about 20% of jobs downtown, continue to experience sustained growth. The number of jobs in management of companies and enterprises and professional, scientific, and technical services increased by 15% between 2010 and 2018. This is an encouraging trend in a downtown that accounts for 12% of Vanderburgh County's private sector employee earnings.

With more residents flocking to the amenity-rich Main Street area, downtown is also a story of contrasts. Census Tract 18, which includes many options for dining and entertainment, is home to a growing population where median household incomes are more than double the citywide average and rents top \$871. Meanwhile, just blocks away south of Walnut Street in Census Tract 17, the population declined by 28% in a decade and median household incomes are just a fraction of the citywide average. While some parts of downtown are thriving commercial and residential centers, other areas are shrinking in size, with displacement greatest among the city's Black population.

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 citywide significance of downtown population and jobs, density of residents and jobs within the district, assessed value per square mile, the rate of growth in population from 2000 to 2019, and the rate of growth of jobs from 2002 to 2018.


These tables show how Evansville compares to its peers in the *growing* 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. Districts and Center Cities* compendium.*

Emerging Downtowns

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

Average of **2% of the citywide land area** with an average assessed value of \$1.47 billion (7% of citywide assessed value) and accounts for:

	DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS
CITYWIDE POPULATION	2.2%	2.3%
18-TO-34-YEAR-OLDS LIVING CITYWIDE	1.9%	3.1%

	DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE*	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS	EMERGING CITIES
 GROWTH AVG. 2010-2019	-26%	18%	10%
RESIDENTS DENSITY RESIDENTS / ACRE	3	6.7	4.5
MEDIAN INCOME HOUSEHOLD	\$30K	\$36K	\$48K
DIVERSITY INDEX	48	64	68

*Downtown excludes group quarters population



EMPLOYMENT

	DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE	EMERGING DOWNTOWNS
CHANGE IN DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT (2002-2018)	-16%	-3%
CITYWIDE JOBS	20%	17%
CITYWIDE KNOWLEDGE JOBS	21%	19%
CITYWIDE CREATIVE JOBS	61%	28%
RESIDENTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	35%	38%

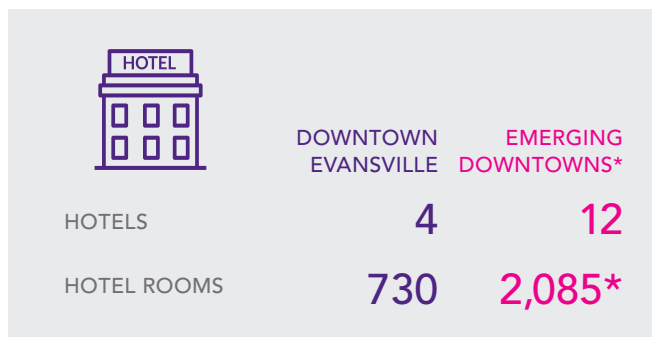
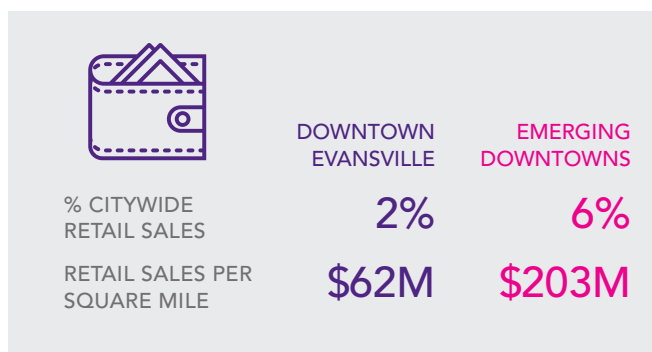
Evansville ranks as an *emerging* downtown. *Emerging* districts have a low proportion of citywide significance in terms of jobs and population (as a group they average 2% of overall population and 17% of jobs) and have lower densities. *Emerging* downtowns don't yet have the high citywide significance in jobs and residents found in other downtowns, and they have relatively lower densities. That also means that they have substantial potential; typically, property

value per square mile remains low relative to other urban places, allowing developers to see greater return on their investments. Similarly, lower rents make these downtowns attractive to small businesses and creators/makers.

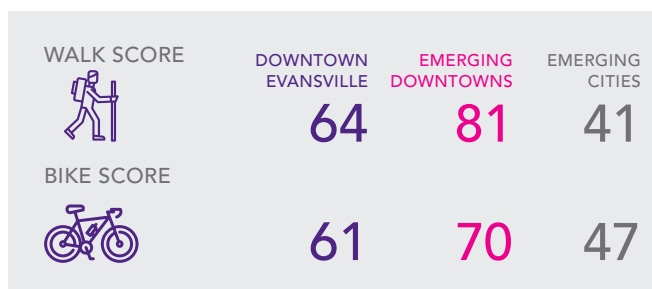
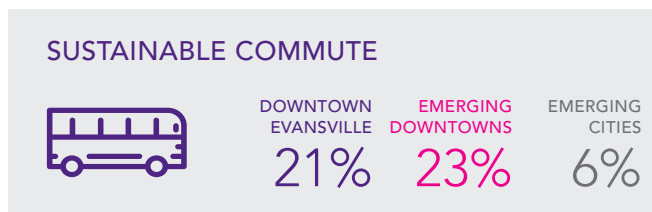
Compared to other downtowns in this tier, Evansville is significantly underperforming in its residential density, with only 3 residents per acre compared to an average of 6.7 residents per acre in emerging downtowns. The lack of density downtown—coupled with the loss of 26% of its residents since 2000—represents a missed opportunity for Evansville to grow from the inside out and is having a negative impact on other key metrics analyzed for this report. As one example, downtown only makes up 2% of citywide retail sales in Evansville compared to an average of 6% in other *emerging* downtowns, with downtown home to only 71 retail businesses. Retail sector performance would likely be much stronger if there were a greater concentration of residents living nearby to support these businesses.

What it lacks in residents, downtown Evansville makes up in visitors. Averaging at least 2.5 million visitors per year, downtown is one of the largest tourist destinations in Southern Indiana. Visitors flock to the area to try their luck at the Tropicana Evansville casino, enjoy a concert or sporting event at the Ford Center, and participate in one of many annual traditions, such as the Fireworks on the Ohio 4th of July fireworks display. Even though it has a fraction of the number of hotels as its peer cities, downtown is home to roughly a quarter of Evansville's hotels, an impressive share in a metro area that is smaller than many other *emerging* downtowns. The recent addition of the new Hyatt Place, which opened in June 2021, is another encouraging sign of a growing demand for rooms to house the influx of visitors to the area.

Finally, compared to other *emerging* downtowns, residents of downtown Evansville use sustainable commuting modes at a comparable level. Since 2017, the share of workers who uses a car alone to get to and from work has decreased by nearly 10%, with roughly one in five residents choosing an alternate mode of transportation. Still, Evansville underperforms other *emerging* downtowns when it comes to its Walk and Bike Scores, and future investments in infrastructure to encourage more pedestrian traffic and bicycle use represents a major opportunity to improve the quality of life for residents downtown.



*This figure excludes downtown San Antonio, which is an outlier for emerging downtowns.





APPENDICES

PROJECT
METHODOLOGY

PRINCIPLES AND
BENEFITS

DATA SOURCES

ADDITIONAL IDA
SOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Appendix I: Project Framework and Methodology



BACKGROUND

In 2017, IDA launched the Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities study. IDA staff and the IDA Research Committee worked with an 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 another 30 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 43 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 distinctiveness, cultural and historical heritage?
- How does a downtown's diversity 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.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES



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.

Fun	Diversity	Density	Creativity	Size
Economic Output	Mobility	Brand	Investment	Resilience
Health	Sustainability	Affordability	Fiscal Impact	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. They identified five principles that became the organizing framework for determining benchmarking metrics.

Downtown advocates tailor their advocacy to the interests of different audiences. For instance, 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 statements about downtown value. 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 identify metrics that allow comparisons across jurisdictions, we made sure necessary comparison data was available for every (or almost every) downtown, city, and region. We favored data that would 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 chose metrics like population, employment, and assessed value for which we could reliably obtain data. We used more specialized data—figures for downtown visitors or hotel tax revenue—when it helped tell a particular downtown story. Comparisons across jurisdictions, however, focus on commonly available metrics.

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

The study team analyzed metrics and comparisons to develop value statements about each 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 the 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 its city's financial services sector is healthy and thriving. Comparing the growth of this sector in other downtowns, or the concentration of financial services jobs relative to other downtowns would highlight the strength of the downtown's appeal to financial services businesses.

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

For this level, the UPMO might include news reports of financial services companies choosing to open offices downtown. An interview with a company executive on why a firm 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 a downtown's unique value to its city.



DEFINING DOWNTOWN

This study defined the commercial downtown as extending beyond the boundaries of a development authority or a business improvement district. For one thing, geographic parameters vary across data sources and frequently did not align with a UPMO's jurisdiction.

Urban place management organizations vary widely in how they define their service geography. To make boundaries replicable and comparable across data sources, the study team recommended aligning each downtown study area 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 do not change.

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 subdivides 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 selected 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 spent the first phase of the project collecting data for the study. IDA collected data primarily from national databases (see Appendix 3 for data sources), and the local partner worked 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.

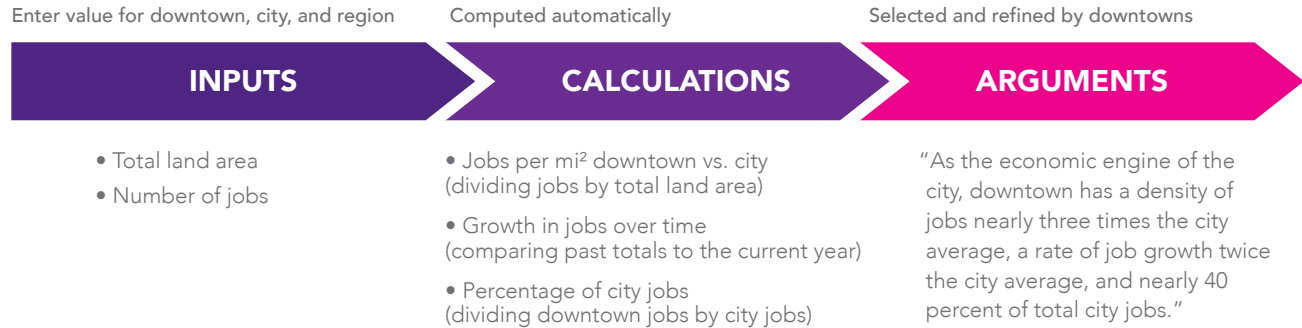
CALCULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

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

- 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

Applying this analysis across all years collected and all applicable geographies captured trends over time and within larger contexts. The flow chart of inputs, calculations, and arguments demonstrates how we move 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 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 43 downtowns that have participated to date into "established," "growing" and "emerging" tiers. Our analysis compared downtown figures to study-wide medians in three areas:

- 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 (2002–2018)
 - o Percent growth in population (2000–2019)

Established – These downtowns contain 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 show steady movement toward that critical mass. This group includes both larger downtowns with lower growth rates, and smaller downtowns with exceptional growth rates.

Emerging – Varying sizes and growth rates mark these downtowns, which generally have lower density and a low proportion of citywide jobs and residents. Because the study examined growth rates since 2000, many downtowns that struggled during the recession had a harder time demonstrating significant growth over the longer term despite stronger growth in recent years.

The compendium report that accompanies *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities* 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 occupying a small fraction of citywide 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:

- 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
- Investment 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, and represent all ages. This diversity ensures that as an inclusive place, a downtown has broad appeal to all users and a strong social fabric.



Illustrative metrics:

- 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 (to be completed in three years)
- Residential units under construction
- Subsidized housing units

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. As the cultural center of its city, downtown typically attracts a large share of citywide visitors and holds 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:

- 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 demand (retail trade and food & drink)
- Retail sales (retail trade and food & drink)
- Retail space in pipeline (to be completed in three years)
- Retail space inventory
- Retail space under construction
- 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 distinctive cultural offerings in downtown enhance its character, heritage, and beauty, and create an environment that other parts of the city can't easily match. 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.

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:

- 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 diversity and density of resources and services, center cities and their inhabitants can better absorb economic, social, and environmental shocks and stresses than the 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 hit less economically and socially dynamic areas particularly hard.



Illustrative metrics:

- 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 in the last month
- Resident population in poverty
- Scooters
- 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 and Consumer Spending	Proprietary	None; allows for drawing of custom geographies; selection of sub-geographies down to census block group level	2017 to 2021 by data set (Annual Updates)
Social Explorer	Demographic, Housing, Crime, Employment	Proprietary	Allows for selection of sub-geographies down to the census block group level	2020 (Annual Updates)
American Community Survey	Demographic, Housing, Employment	Public	Allows for selection of sub-geographies down to the census block group level	2019 (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	2018 (Annual Updates)
Center for Neighborhood Technology	Housing affordability, Sustainability, Income	Public	Allows for selection and exporting of sub-geographies down to census 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	2017 (Annual Updates)
FBI Uniform Crime Reporting	Crime Rates	Public	City and Metro	2020 (Annual 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.

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.

Downtown Rebirth: Documenting the Live-Work Dynamic in 21st Century U.S. Cities: 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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