

2024-646A

Downtown Gainesville

Needs Assessment Survey Results



October 24, 2024

MKSK

Today's Presentation

- 1 Needs Assessment Survey Overview
- 2 Survey Results & Demographics
- 3 Key Takeaways
- 4 Looking Ahead

1,396 responses resulting in 7 key takeaways

Provide Services for the Unhoused Population

Address Vacancies & Support Businesses

Safety is Key To Downtown's Success

Downtown Needs to be
Clean and Beautiful

Downtown Needs to be
More Walkable

Keep Activating
Downtown with Events

More Convenient and
Affordable Parking

About the Needs Assessment Survey

Taking approximately 7 minutes to answer, the Needs Assessment Survey was divided into three main parts:

1,396

Responses between
July 3 and July 26, 2024

01

Your Connection to Downtown Gainesville: Your connection to downtown, what brings you there, and when?

02

Needs Assessment: What services or programs matter to downtown, which will be most impactful, where are they needed, and when?

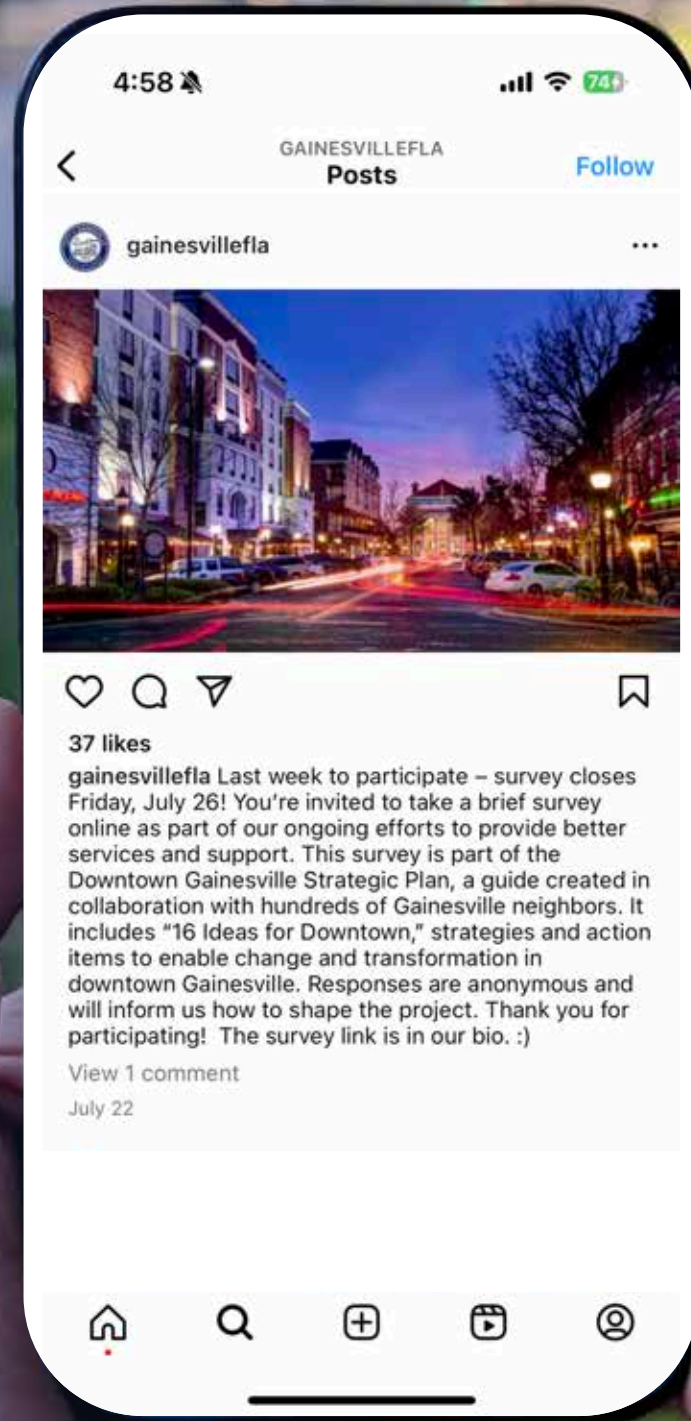
03

Tell us about yourself: Key demographics including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and ZIP Code.

Sharing the Needs Assessment Survey

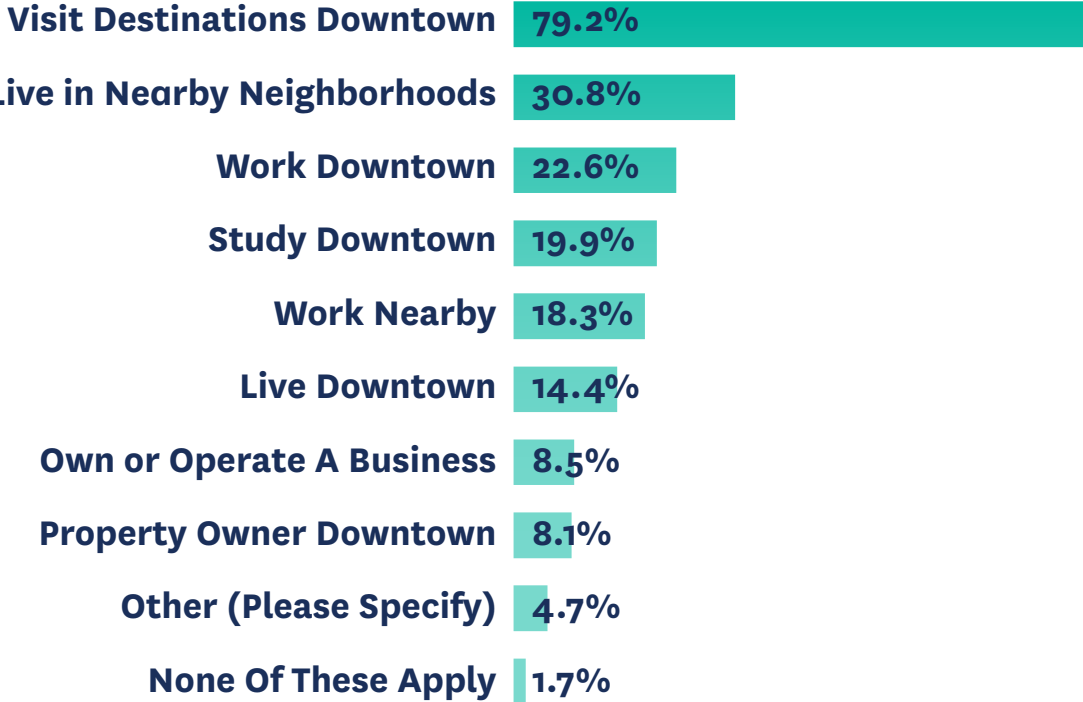
The survey was shared via
the following methods:

- ▶ City social media channels
- ▶ Mass emails with City distribution lists
- ▶ To cast a wider net, beyond people who opted to engage with the GCRA and the city, the GCRA asked various community partners to share with their respective boards, organizations, and affinity groups.

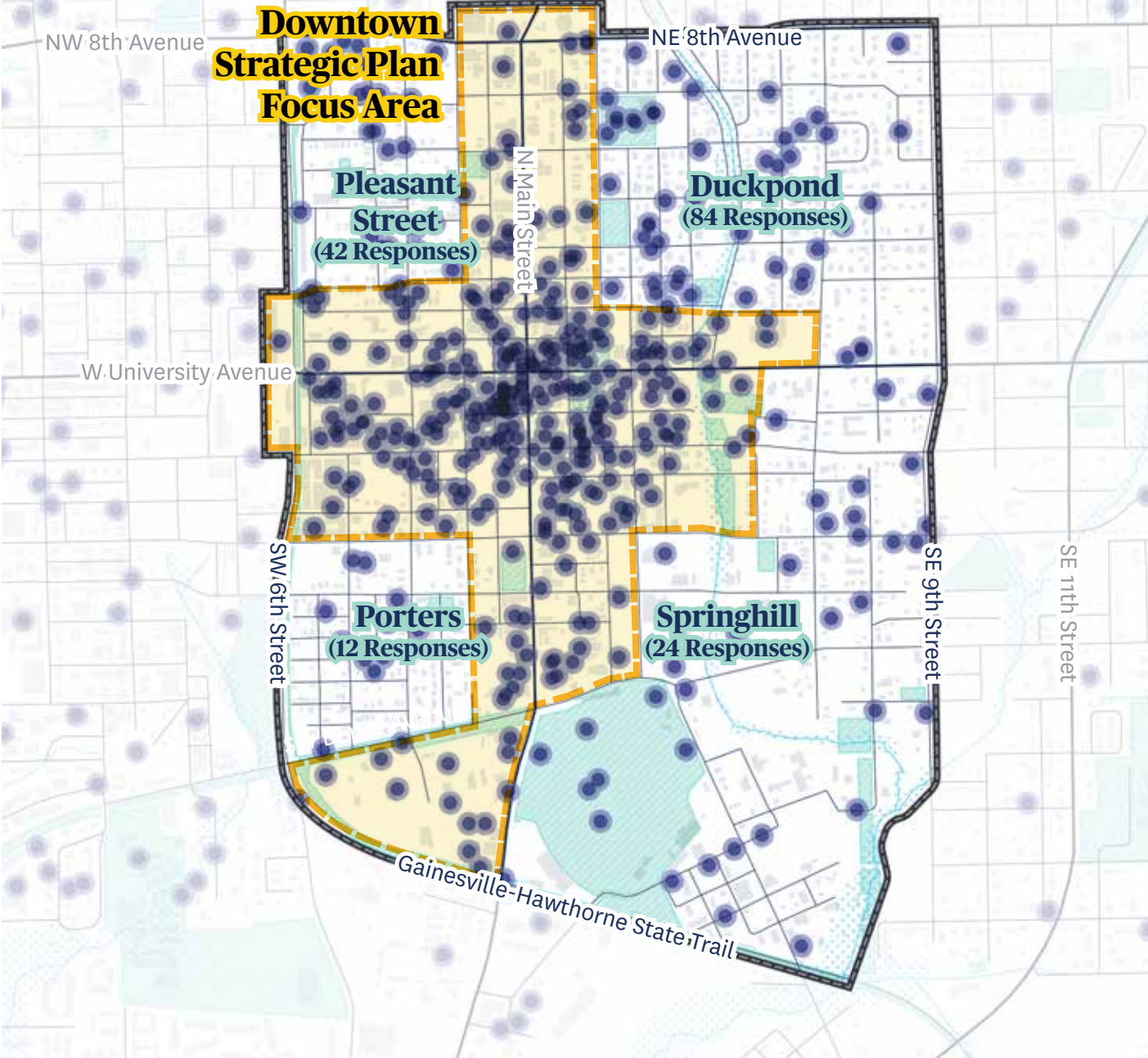


What is your connection to downtown?

▶ Please select your main interest(s) within Downtown Gainesville. The area defined as Downtown is within the black outline on the map.



▶ How are you connected to downtown? Participants were asked to show the approximate location of their home, property, workplace, or business on a map.

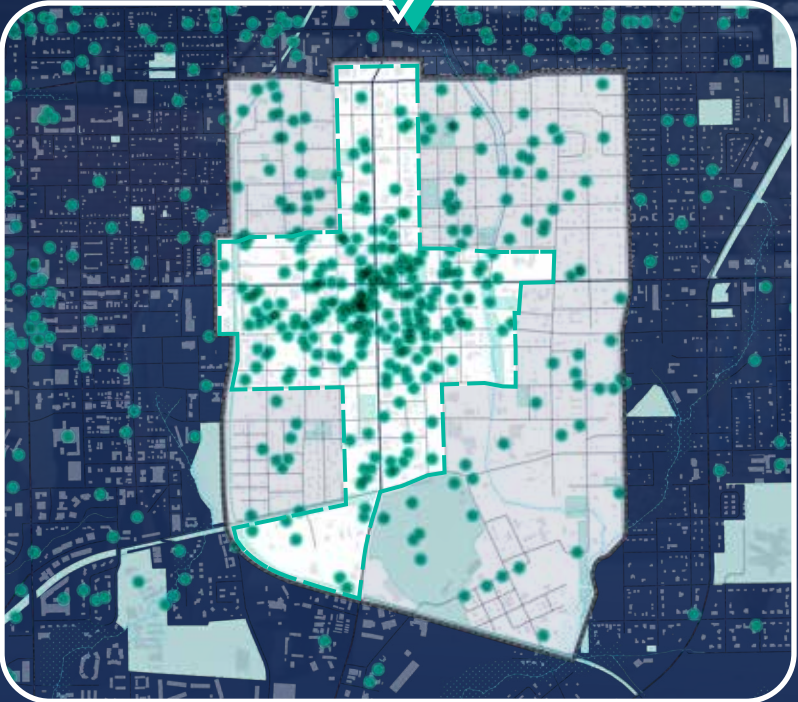


Downtown User Groups

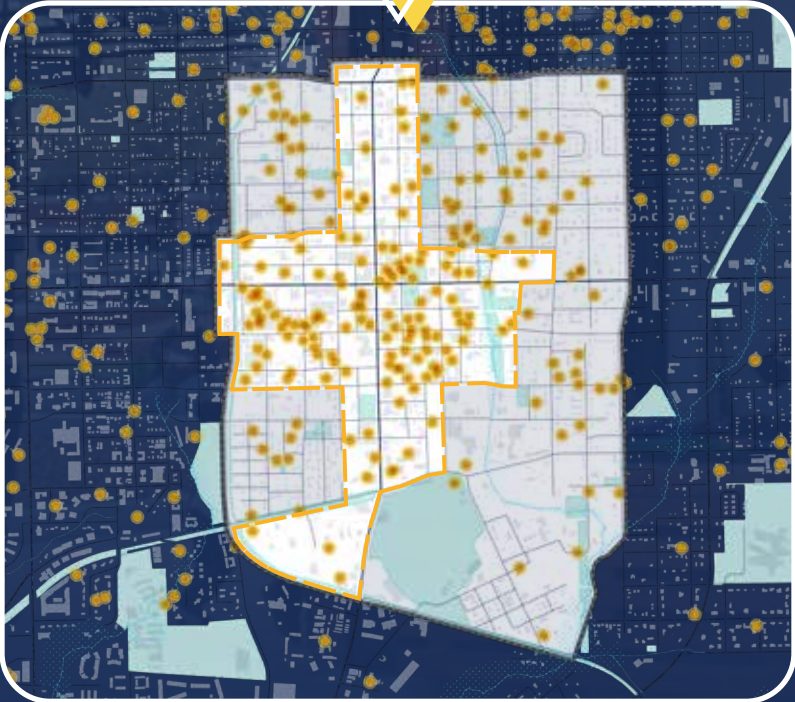
- ▶ How are you connected to downtown?
Participants were asked to show the approximate location of their home, property, workplace, or business on a map.

1,396
Total Downtown
Responses

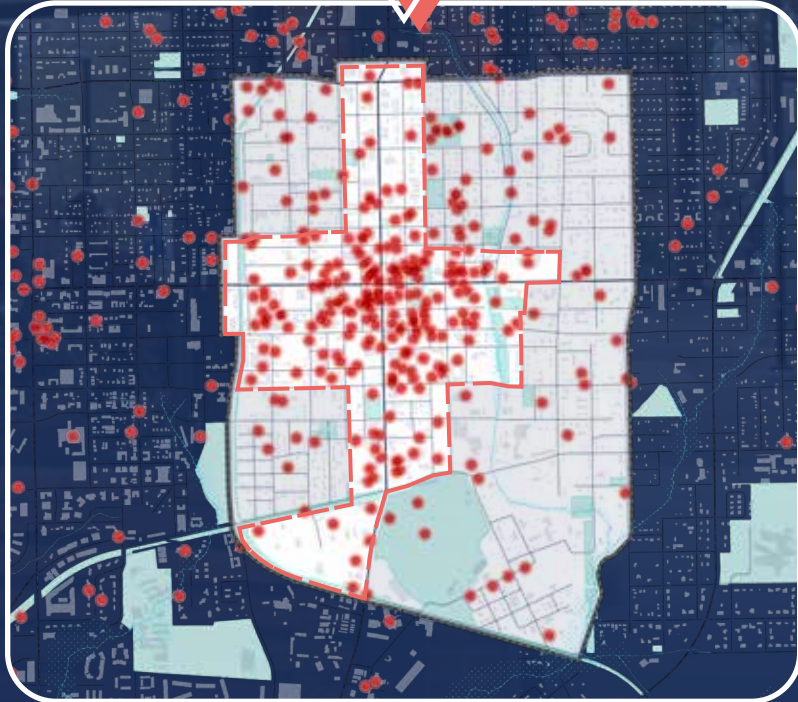
**1,011 Visitors to
downtown destinations**



**203 Neighbors live
inside boundary**



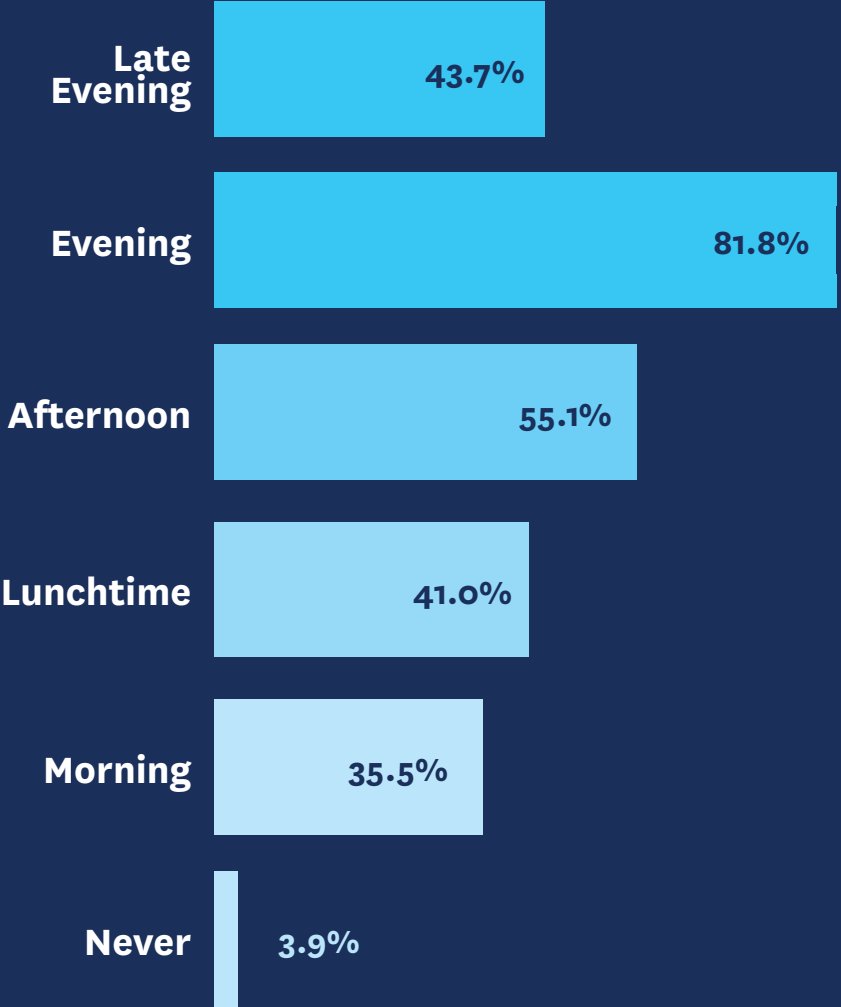
**182 Businesses/Owners
inside boundary**



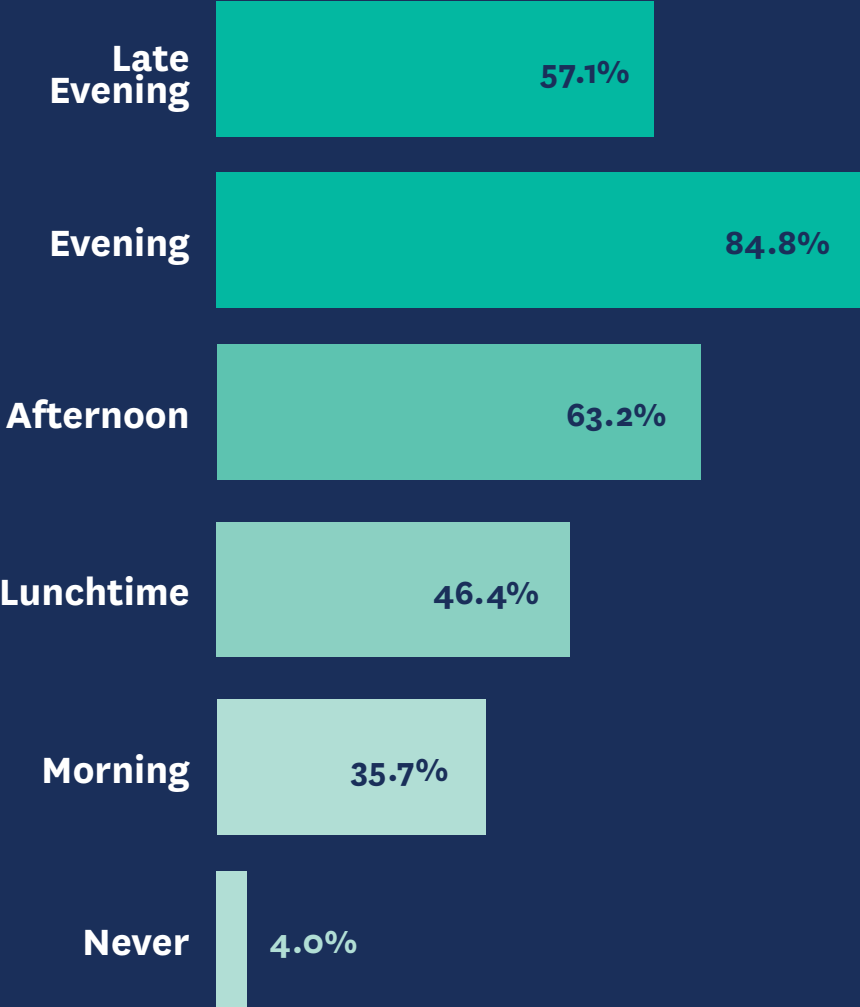
Experiencing Downtown

► What time(s) do you normally visit Downtown Gainesville?

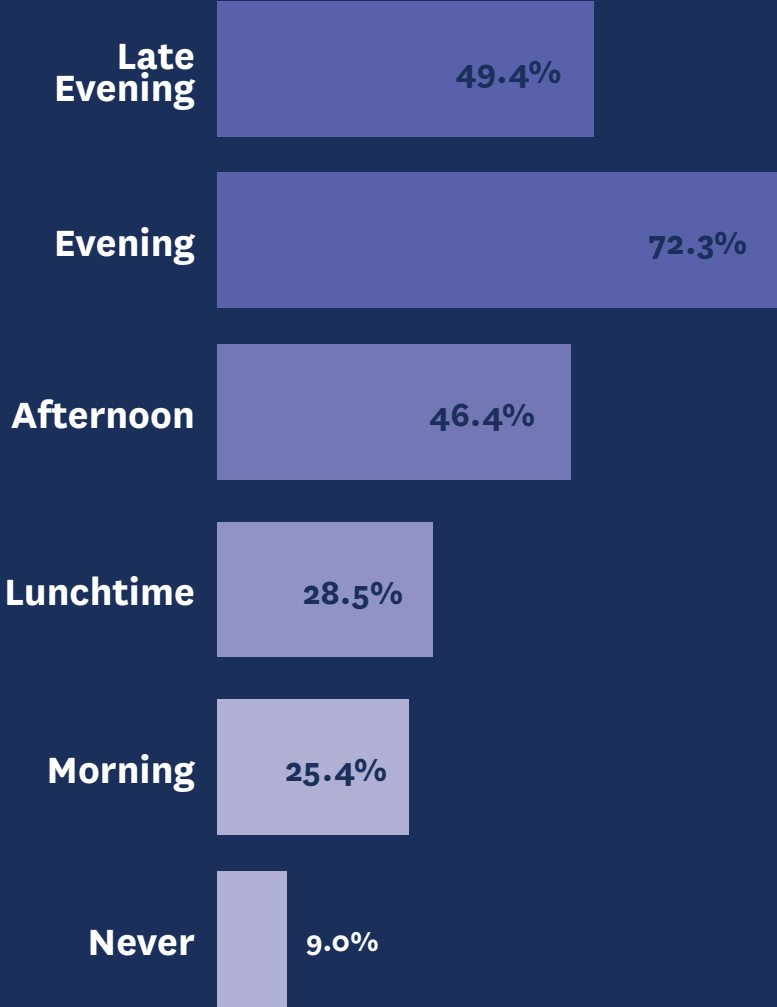
WEEKDAYS



WEEKENDS



SPECIAL EVENTS

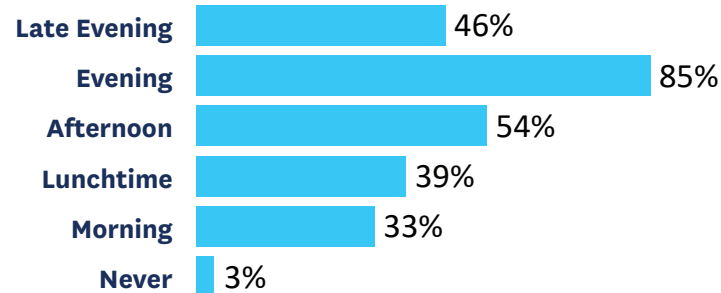


Experiencing Downtown: User Groups

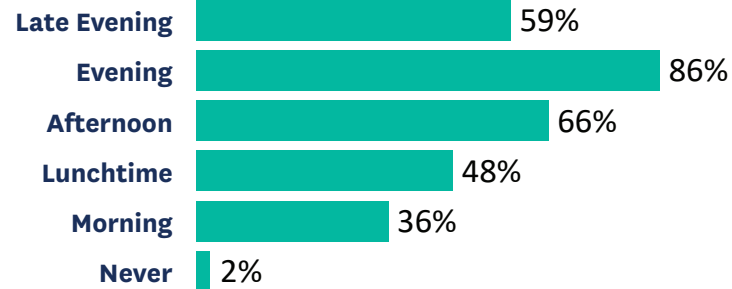
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Downtown Visitors (1,000+ Responses)

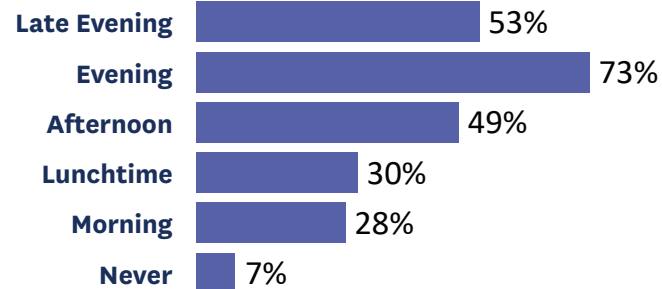
WEEKDAYS



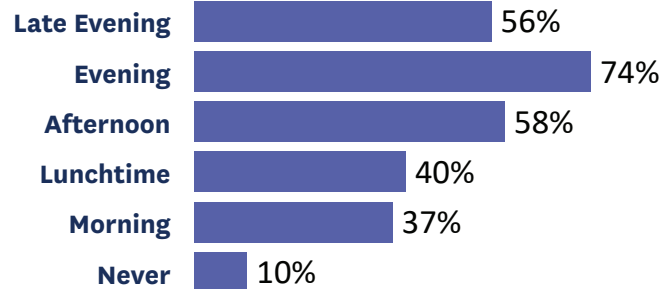
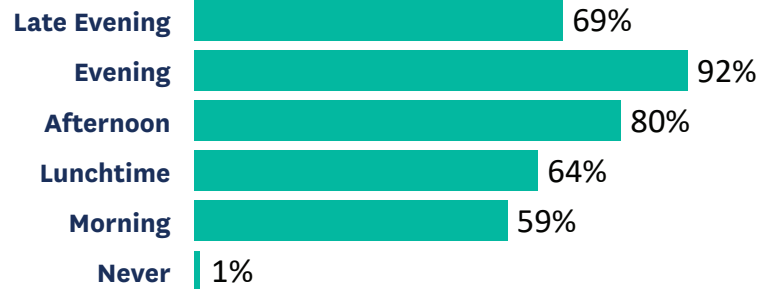
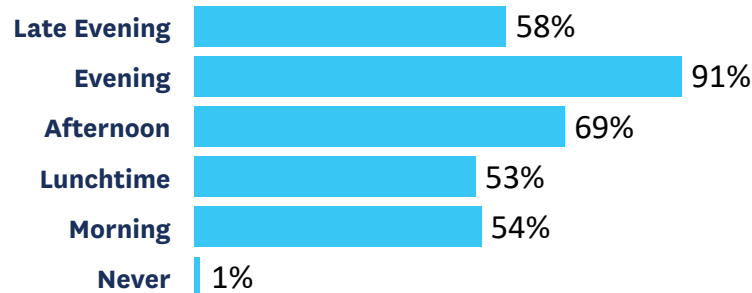
WEEKENDS



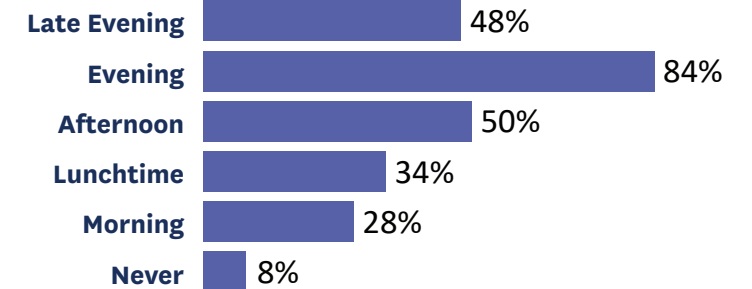
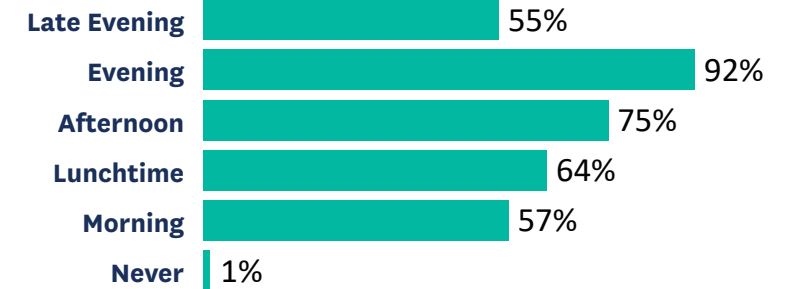
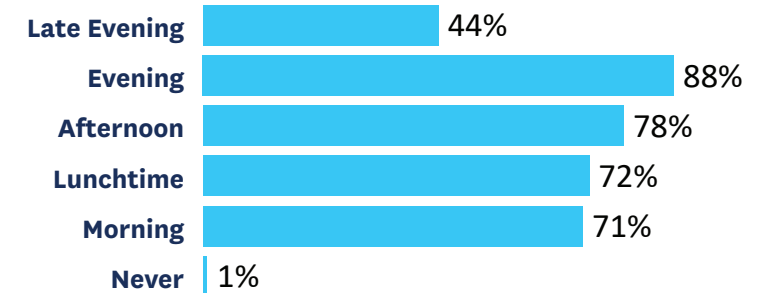
SPECIAL EVENTS



Downtown Residents (196 Responses)



Downtown Businesses/Property Owners (175 Responses)

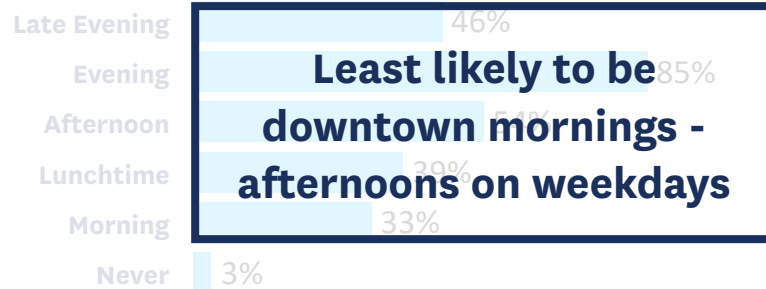


Experiencing Downtown: User Groups

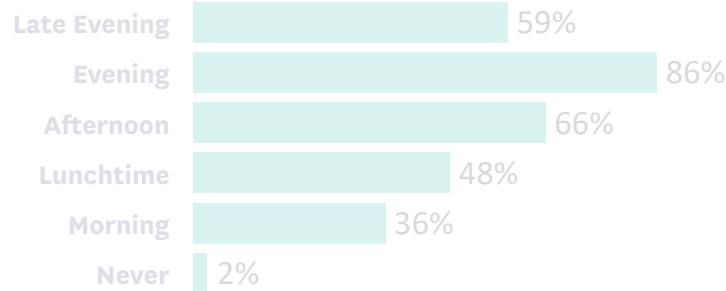
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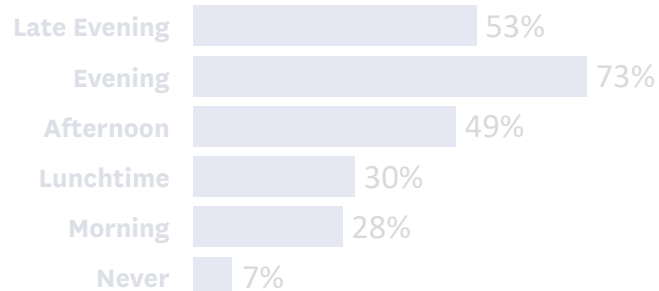
WEEKDAYS



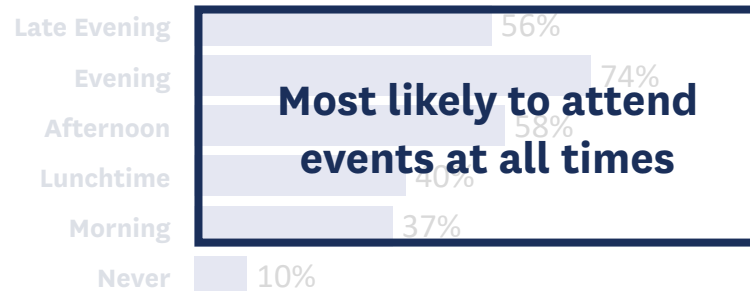
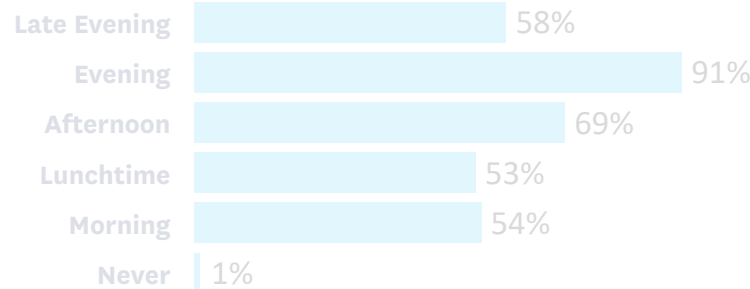
WEEKENDS



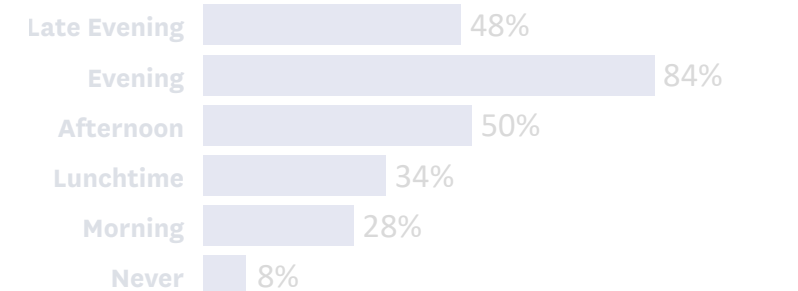
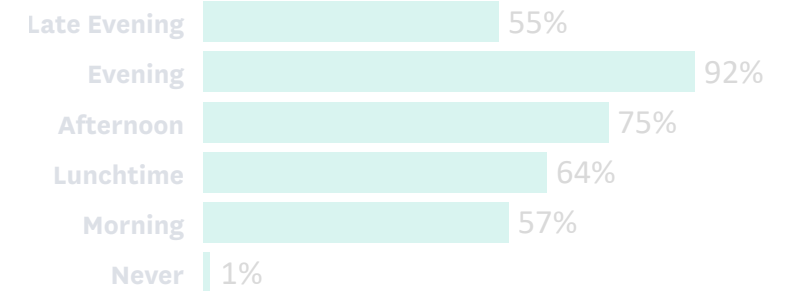
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Downtown Residents (196 Responses)

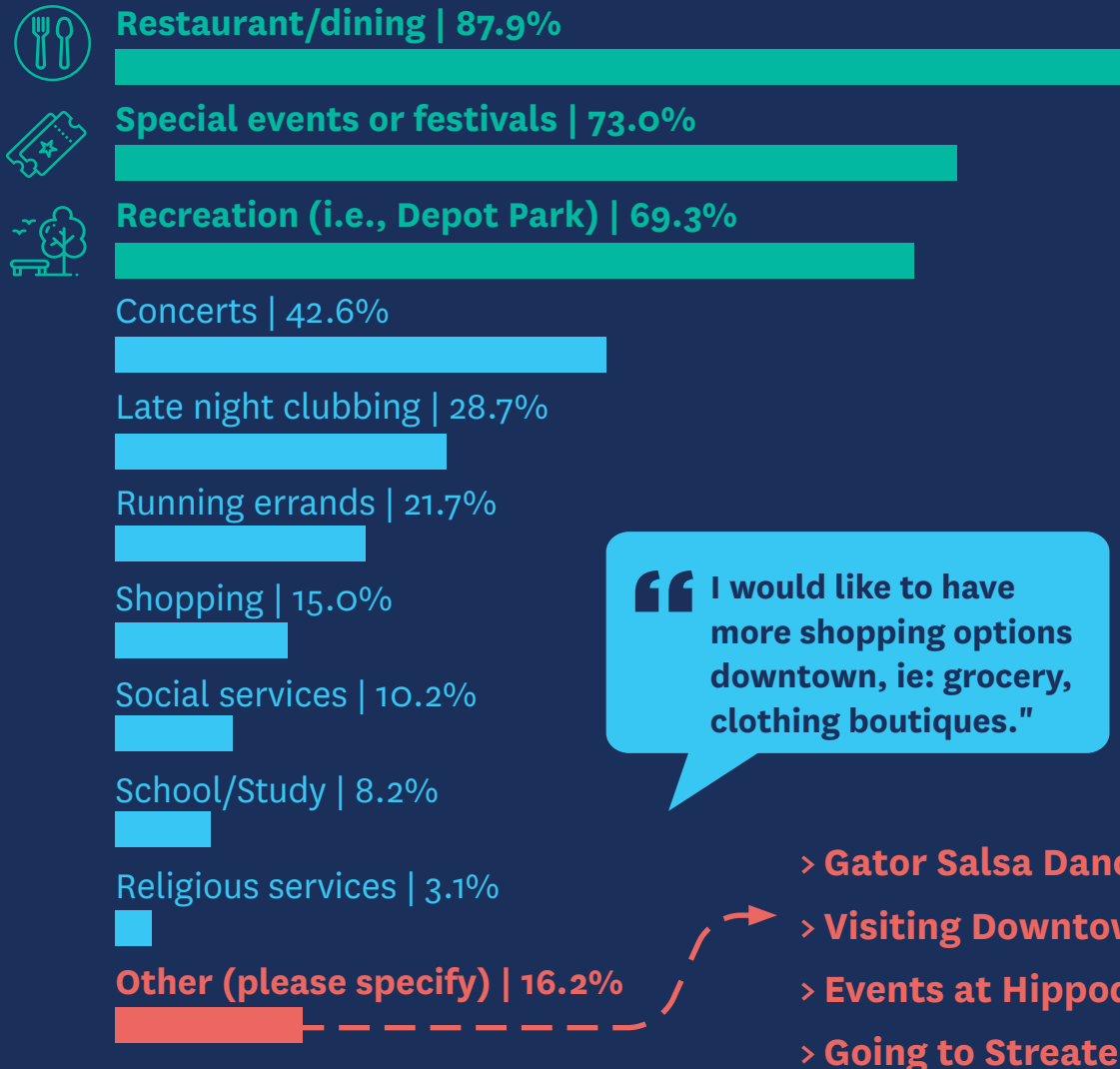


Downtown Businesses/Property Owners (175 Responses)



Experiencing Downtown

► What are the main reasons you visit Downtown Gainesville, aside from living or working in the downtown core?



“ I would like to have more shopping options downtown, ie: grocery, clothing boutiques.”

“ Swing and Salsa Dancing, as well as storytelling events at the Bull!”

“ I walk the area most every evening when I am at home and love it.”

“ I wish there were more retail/grocery options, I'd do that too if so.”

“ Hippodrome!”

- > Gator Salsa Dancing
- > Visiting Downtown Library
- > Events at Hippodrome Theatre
- > Going to Sreatery



Potential Programs & Services for Downtown

► The list of services and programs below were informed by the **Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan**. The Needs Assessment Survey asked participants to rate their value to downtown. (1= No value at all; 2=Little value; 3=Moderate value; 4=Good value; 5=Excellent value).



Cleveland, OH

Support for small businesses and filling vacant storefronts



Support services for the unhoused



Miami, FL

Beautification efforts including public art, enhanced lighting, and streetscapes



Cincinnati, OH

Planning and producing **events and festivals**



Atlanta, GA

Planting and maintenance of trees, flowers, landscaping, etc.



Building community and partnerships in downtown



Columbus, OH

Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup



Columbus, OH

Additional **downtown security** services



Creating a **downtown management organization** to address downtown issues



Atlanta, GA

Promoting Downtown Gainesville, including branding and marketing campaigns



Removing undesirable graffiti



Jacksonville, FL

Downtown ambassadors present in the area

Value of Programs & Services: All Responses

► What do you think matters most to our downtown? Please rate the value of each potential service or program. (1= No value at all; 2=Little value; 3=Moderate value; 4=Good value; 5=Excellent value).

Highest Value

4.43

Average Value
out of 5

Support for small
businesses and filling
vacant storefronts

4.23

Average Value
out of 5

Support services for
the unhoused

4.18

Average Value
out of 5

Beautification efforts
including public art,
enhanced lighting, and
streetscapes

4.18

Average Value
out of 5

Planning and producing
events and festivals

4.15

Average Value
out of 5

Planting and
maintenance of trees,
flowers, landscaping,
etc.

4.14

Average Value
out of 5

Building community
and partnerships in
downtown

4.0

Average Value
out of 5

Sidewalk sweeping/
cleanup

3.64

Average Value
out of 5

Additional downtown
security services

3.57

Average Value
out of 5

Creating a downtown
management
organization to address
downtown issues

3.31

Average Value
out of 5

Promoting Downtown
Gainesville, including
branding and marketing
campaigns

3.14

Average Value
out of 5

Removing undesirable
graffiti

2.82

Average Value
out of 5

Downtown
ambassadors present
in the area

Value of Programs & Services: Downtown Users

► What do you think matters most to our downtown? Please rate the value of each potential service or program (Shown below highest to lowest value, with weighted average of value out of 5).

Downtown Visitors (983 Responses)

1. Support for small businesses (4.44)
2. Support services for the unhoused (4.27)
3. Beautification efforts (4.21)
4. Planning events and festivals (4.21)
5. Building community and partnerships (4.16)
6. Tree Planting and Landscaping (4.14)
7. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (3.99)
8. Additional downtown security (3.59)
9. Downtown management organization (3.56)
10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (3.28)
11. Removing undesirable graffiti (3.06)
12. Downtown ambassadors (2.81)

Downtown Residents (175 Responses)

1. Support for small businesses (4.51)
2. Planning events and festivals (4.4)
3. Support services for the unhoused (4.37)
4. Building community and partnerships (4.33)
5. Beautification efforts (4.31)
6. Tree Planting and Landscaping (4.29)
7. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (3.97)
8. Downtown management organization (3.75)
9. Additional downtown security (3.41)
10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (3.35)
11. Downtown ambassadors (2.94)
12. Removing undesirable graffiti (2.82)

Downtown Businesses/Property Owners (165 Responses)

1. Support for small businesses (4.39)
2. Beautification efforts (4.26)
3. Tree Planting and Landscaping (4.22)
4. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (4.12)
5. Planning events and festivals (4.06)
6. Building community and partnerships (4.06)
7. Additional downtown security (3.96)
8. Support services for the unhoused (3.77)
9. Downtown management organization (3.73)
10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (3.59)
11. Removing undesirable graffiti (3.58)
12. Downtown ambassadors (3.15)

Value of Programs & Services: Ambassador Services

▶ Despite ranking lowest, downtown ambassadors can perform many of the services noted to have a high value by survey respondents.



Downtown Ambassadors

A key action resulting from the Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan is launching a downtown ambassador program that places additional eyes, ears, and voices on the streets.

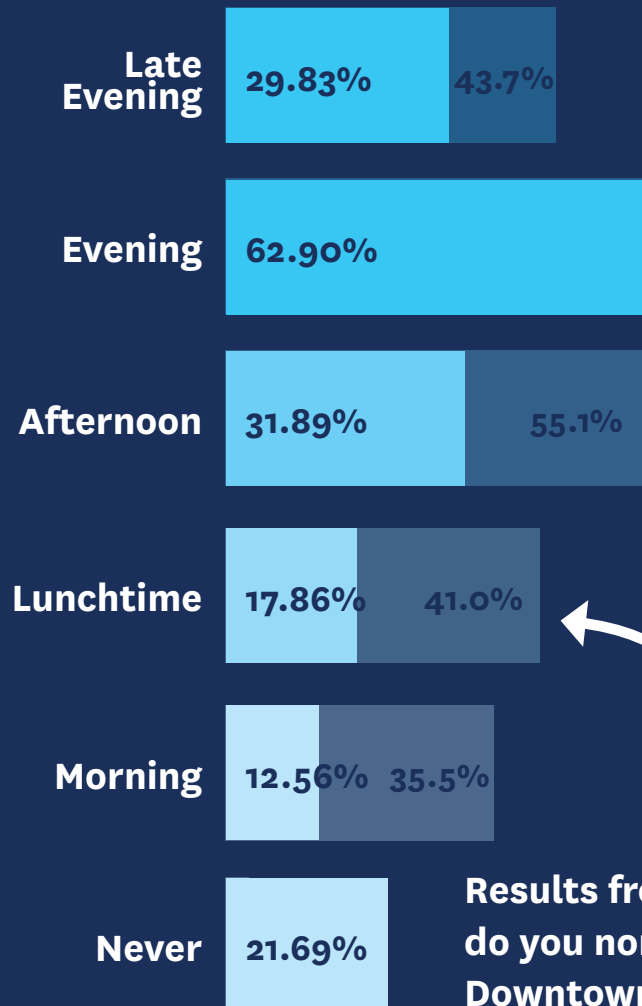
Ambassadors are helpers who keep things clean, beautiful, and friendly – making sure a neighborhood remains in excellent shape. They can provide distinct services in a neighborhood, like graffiti cleanup, safety escorts, landscaping, and social outreach services.



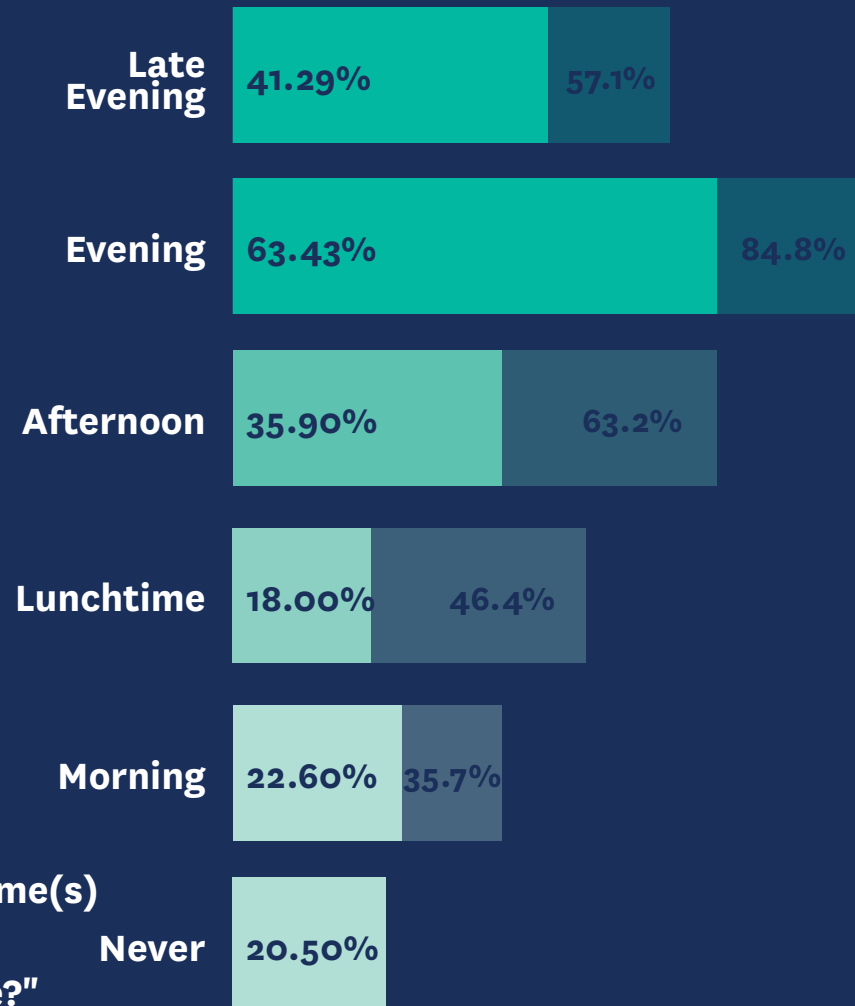
Downtown Ambassadors

► What time(s) would the presence of a downtown ambassador be most helpful or impactful? Please select from the options below:

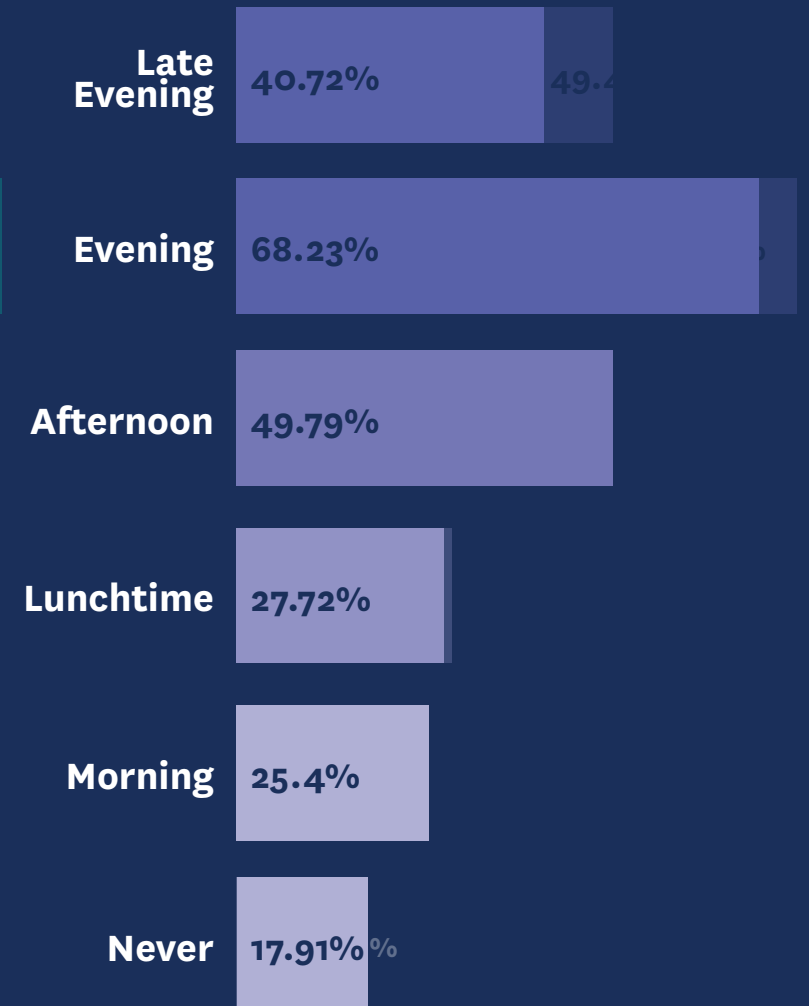
WEEKDAYS



WEEKENDS



SPECIAL EVENTS



Results from "What time(s) do you normally visit Downtown Gainesville?" shown below



Downtown Ambassadors

► What time(s) would the presence of a downtown ambassador be most helpful or impactful?

Many neighbors don't know what a Downtown Ambassador is

“ I have no idea what a 'downtown ambassador' is?”

“ I'm still not entirely sure who the downtown ambassadors would be. Like more security guards essentially?”

People need more information about Ambassador Services

“ Why does the City need to hire more people? We have street sweepers, police, an entire communications department etc.”

Some neighbors rather see funds go elsewhere and see little value in ambassadors

“ If the downtown ambassador is there to keep spaces clean, help houseless folks find safe spaces to sleep outside of private businesses, and support the businesses around downtown, their presence would be embraced and would be welcome in daytime and into the late evenings...”

Many are supportive and see the value!

Most Impactful Programs & Services

► Of all the potential programs and services, which are most important or impactful for downtown Gainesville? Please choose your top three items.



#1
(56.8%)

Support for small businesses and filling vacant storefronts



#2
(55%)

Support services for the unhoused



#3
(30.9%)

Planning and producing **events and festivals**



Most Impactful Programs & Services: Downtown Users

► Of all the potential programs and services, which are most important or impactful for downtown Gainesville? Please choose your top three items.

Downtown Visitors (985 Responses)

**1. Support services for the unhoused
(58.5%)**

**2. Support for small businesses
(56.2%)**

**3. Planning events and festivals
(32.9%)**

4. Beautification efforts (29.3%)

5. Tree Planting and Landscaping (24.0%)

6. Building community and partnerships (22.3%)

7. Additional downtown security (21.2%)

8. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (19.3%)

9. Downtown management organization (10.4%)

10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (6.9%)

11. Removing undesirable graffiti (4.7%)

12. Downtown ambassadors (3.1%)

13. None of the Above (1.1%)

Downtown Residents (177 Responses)

**1. Support services for the unhoused
(61.6%)**

**2. Support for small businesses
(55.4%)**

**3. Planning events and festivals
(36.2%)**

4. Beautification efforts (31.6%)

5. Tree Planting and Landscaping (24.9%)

6. Building community and partnerships (24.3%)

7. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (19.8%)

8. Additional downtown security (15.8%)

9. Downtown management organization (10.7%)

10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (4.5%)

11. Removing undesirable graffiti (2.8%)

12. Downtown ambassadors (2.8%)

13. None of the Above (1.1%)

Downtown Businesses/Property Owners (165 Responses)

**1. Support for small businesses
(53.9%)**

**2. Support services for the unhoused
(40.1%)**

**3. Additional downtown security
(31.1%)**

4. Sidewalk sweeping/cleanup (29.3%)

5. Beautification efforts (27.5%)

6. Tree Planting and Landscaping (22.2%)

7. Planning events and festivals (18.6%)

8. Building community and partnerships (16.2%)

9. Downtown management organization (15.6%)

10. Promoting Downtown Gainesville (14.4%)

11. Removing undesirable graffiti (7.8%)

12. Downtown ambassadors (5.4%)

13. None of the Above (3%)

Where Should the Focus be Directed?

► Tell us why you selected that location:

#1

The **unhoused population** downtown makes the area feel **unsafe**. There is a need for more services for the unhoused.

#2

Parking downtown is complicated to find and once you park, garages/parking lots feel **unsafe** for visitors.

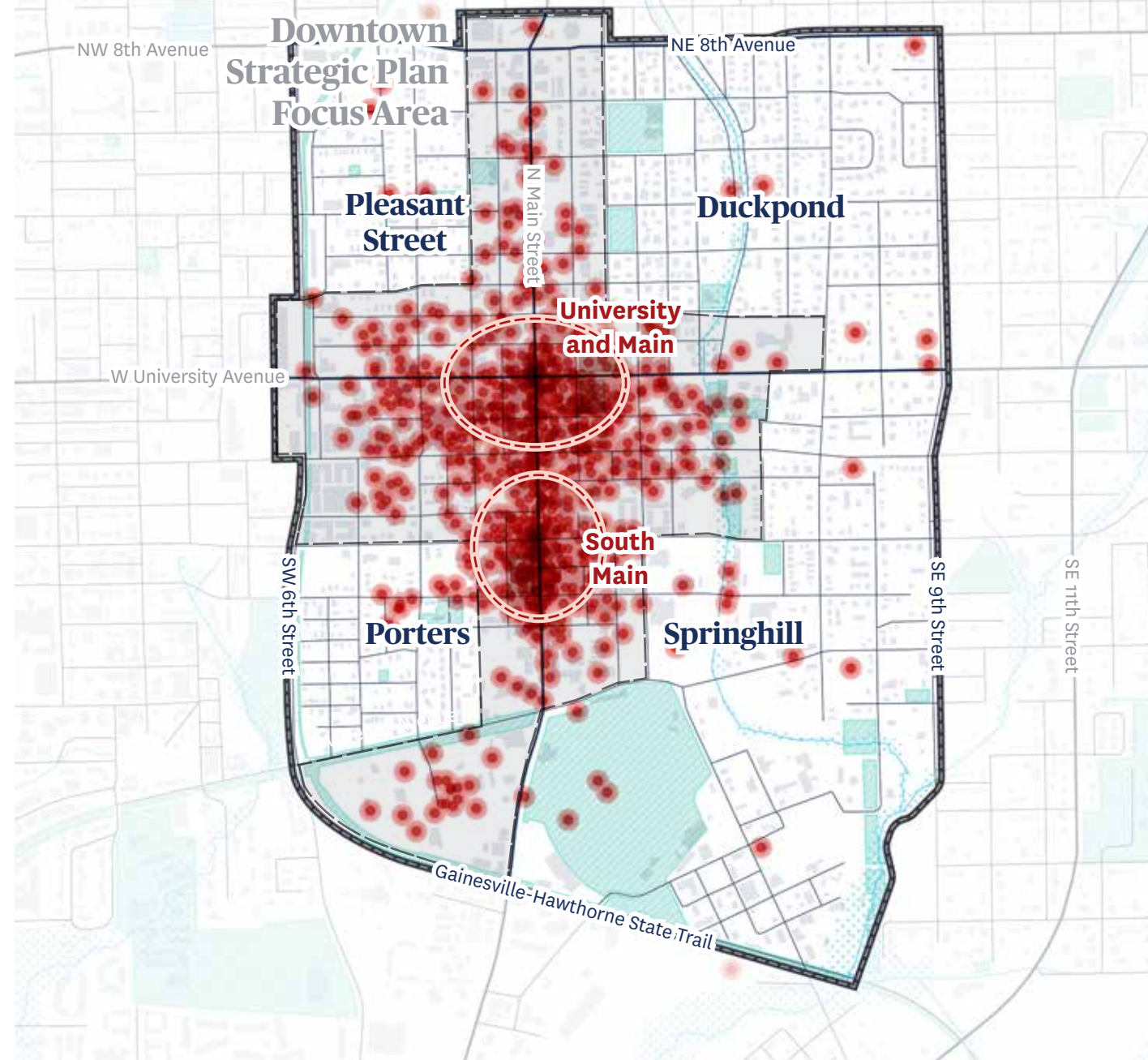
#3

There are **too many vacant businesses and storefronts** that make downtown feel empty and **unsafe**.

#4

Sidewalks are narrow and poorly maintained, downtown should be more walkable and beautiful.

► Participants were asked to identify the areas of downtown most in need of their prioritized special services.



Making Downtown More Welcoming

► Is there a single project, change or improvement that would make Downtown Gainesville a more welcoming place for neighbors, workers, visitors, and the business community?

“ REAL and SOLID support for unhoused people.”

Support for the unhoused to make downtown feel safer.

(199 Mentions)

Easier, safer, more convenient, better marked, and more affordable parking options.

(205 Mentions)

Activate downtown with more events

(49 Mentions)

“ If cultural events like art shows were held at Depot Park it would attract more people to make a difference in their property.”

Fill vacant storefronts with local businesses

(31 Mentions)

“ Investment in downtown, we need more community spaces and businesses in vacant storefronts to keep the town alive”

“ Free parking and more strategically placed/relevant businesses that get people walking around and interacting with the downtown area more.”

Make downtown more walkable and accessible by transit.

(28 Mentions)

“ Make it a more walkable city and include diverse public transportation.”

Making Downtown More Welcoming

► Is there a single project, change or improvement that would make Downtown Gainesville a more welcoming place for neighbors, workers, visitors, and the business community?

Downtown Visitors (704 Responses)

1. **Make parking easier** and provide free on-street parking near businesses, especially after 5 PM.
2. **Provide more services for the unhoused**, such as access to shelters and job placement so they do not need to gather in downtown's streets.
3. **Make downtown more walkable and accessible by transit**, such as a trolley or better/more frequent RTS Routes.
4. **Attract more people** by filling empty storefronts with local/unique businesses.
5. **Supporting existing downtown businesses** by cleaning up downtown and maintaining sidewalks.

Downtown Residents (133 Responses)

1. **Provide more services for downtown's unhoused population** - this will help those in need and make downtown feel safer in return.
2. **Improve the parking experience** so it's easier, cheaper, and safer - MORE parking will not necessarily be better.
3. **Fill vacant storefronts** with local businesses to attract more energy and people.
4. **Make downtown more walkable**, bike-friendly, and more welcoming for transit users.
5. **Add more festivals**, events, and cultural activities to bring more people downtown.

Downtown Businesses/Property Owners (145 Responses)

1. **Improve parking** by adding free unmetered on-street parking, better signage, and clearer parking information.
2. **Address downtown's unhoused population** by providing better resources and clean up the areas they gather.
3. **Create city incentives**, such as storefront improvement grants or support with rent, to attract more local businesses downtown and fill in vacant storefronts.
4. **Focus on walkability and transit options** to increase downtown's foot traffic - this will in return help support businesses.
5. **Activate downtown** with more events, festivals, and happenings.

Keep Up The Good Work!

► Is there a service/program currently provided by the City of Gainesville (or another entity) impacting downtown that you would like to maintain or improve?

“ I would love to see an expansion of health and wellness programs/ events for families/young adults at Bo Diddley and Depot Park.”

#1



Downtown's events and festivals, such as art fairs, concert series, Free Fridays, and Latin salsa night.

#2



Beautification and placemaking that has brightened up parts of Main Street and Depot Park.

#3



Pedestrian streets with outdoor dining, such as the area by The Bull ("Streatery")

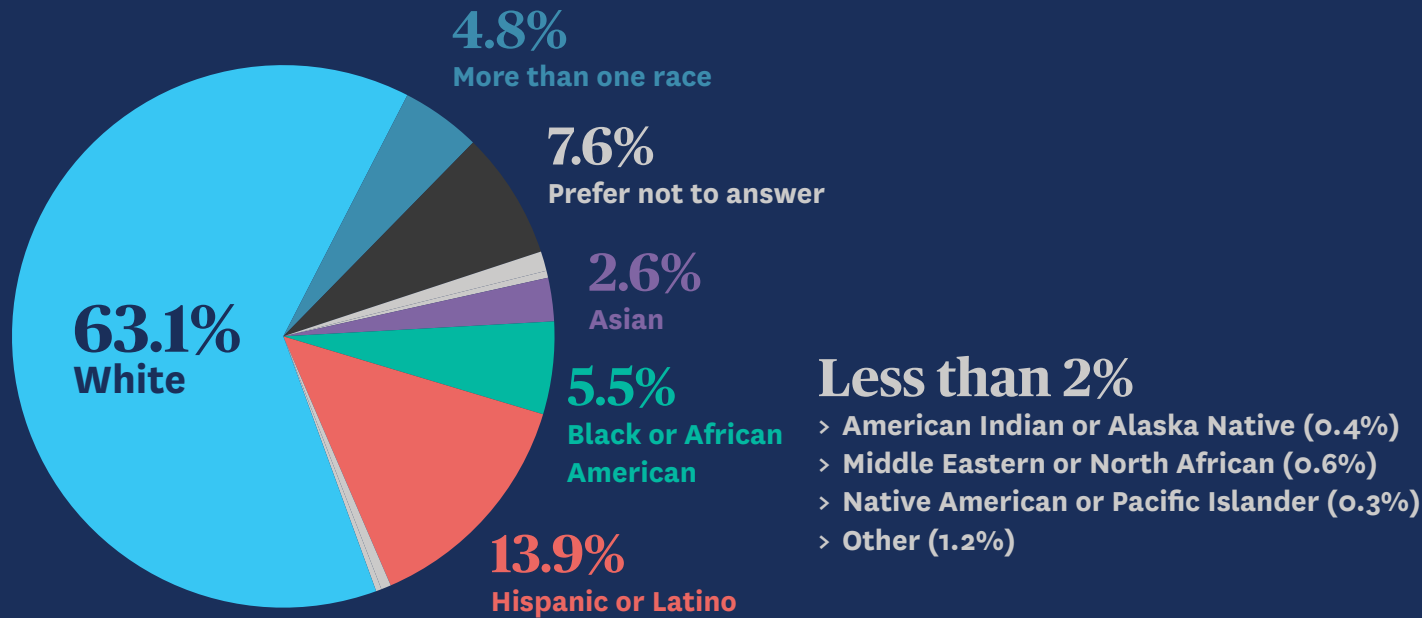
#4



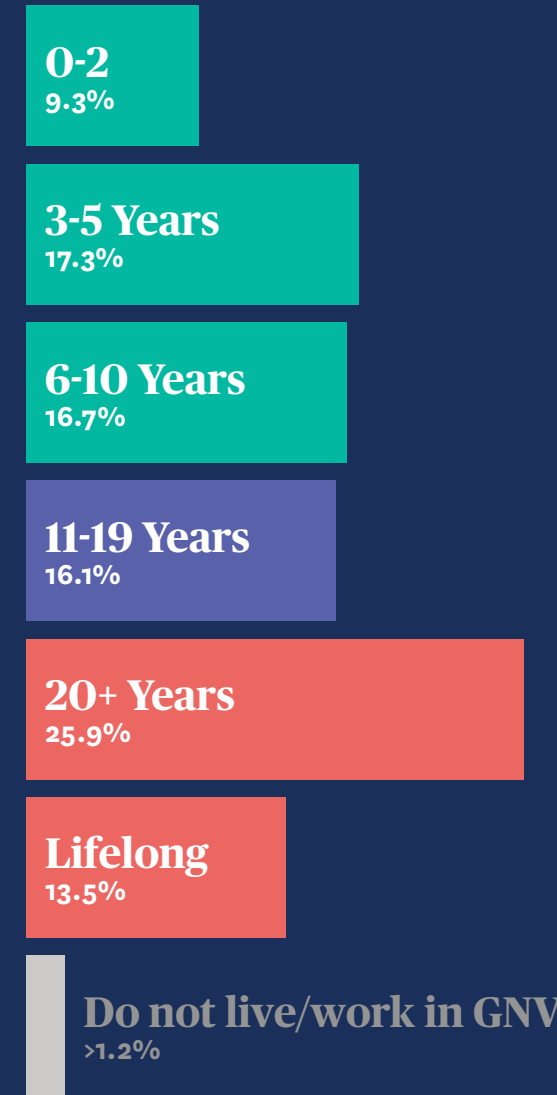
Depot Park is a downtown gem that has added green space and a place for people to gather.

The Voices We Heard

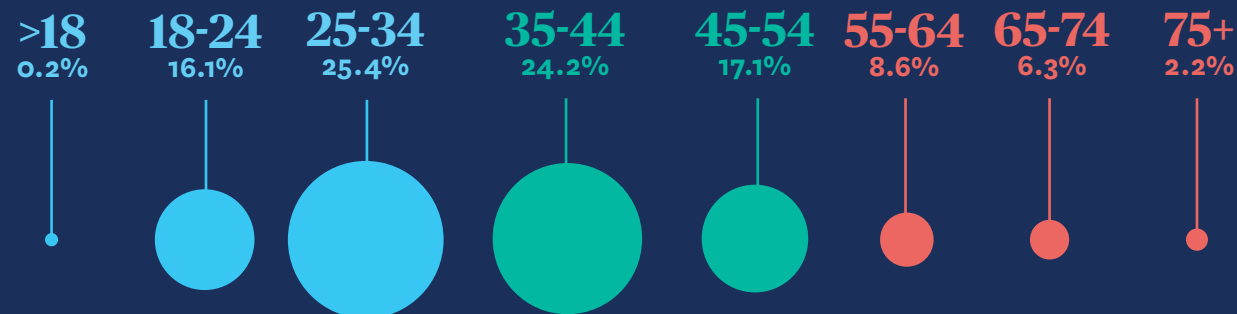
▶ Which RACE/ETHNICITY best describes you?



▶ How long have you LIVED/WORKED IN GNV?



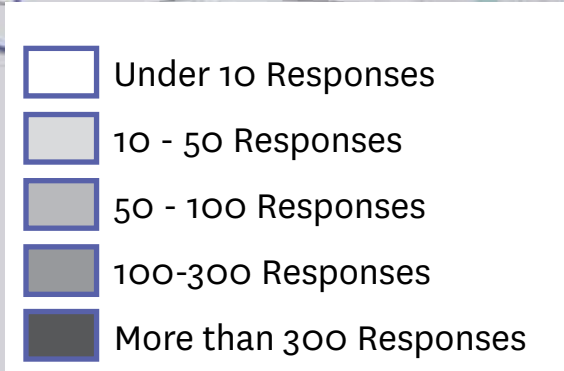
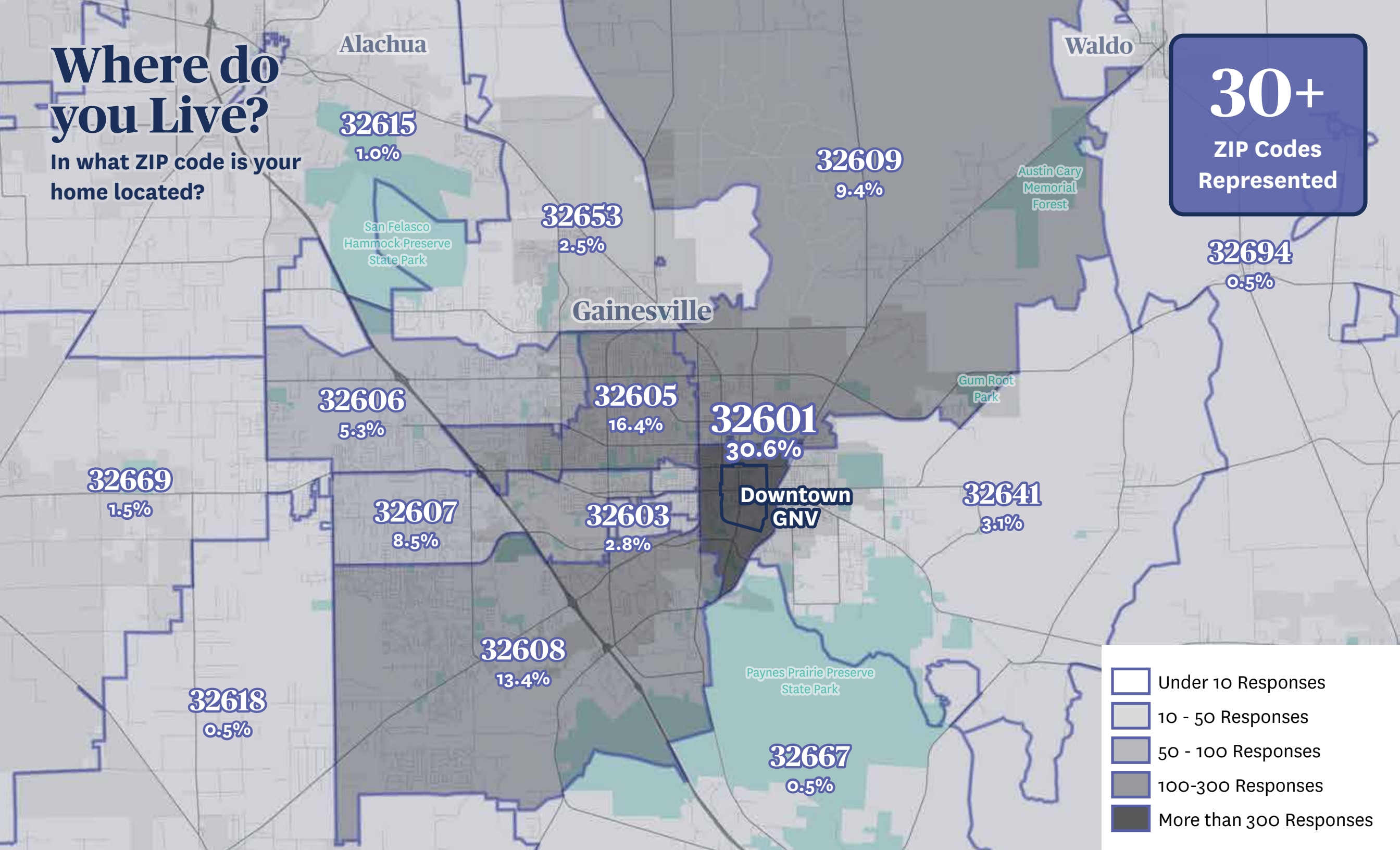
▶ What is your AGE?



Where do you Live?

In what ZIP code is your home located?

30+
ZIP Codes Represented



What We Learned: Key Findings (1 of 2)

Provide Services for the Unhoused Population

There is a community-wide need for humane, real, and meaningful help for the unhoused. This investment will in return make downtown feel safer and more welcoming. Many note that the presence of the unhoused lead many neighbors to avoid walking in downtown altogether.

Address Vacancies & Support Businesses

Vacant storefronts make downtown feel empty and unsafe. The City should prioritize filling in these vacancies and supporting current businesses, with a focus on small businesses beyond bars and restaurants. Ideas includes incentives, subsidized rent, or improvement grants.

Safety is Key To Downtown's Success

Many survey participants expressed concerns rooted in a perceived lack of safety. Making downtown feel safer, whether from less vacancies, by servicing the unhoused, or by improving lighting in parking areas, will help bring more people to downtown.

“ Providing better services for the unhoused in the Downtown region so that they are not forced to form street camps. A complete holistic approach to services is required, we can't keep fragmenting services between regions of town. And the unhoused are not just going to go away because they are unwanted.”

“ The vacant storefronts really make the city seem emptier than I think it really is, so I think more activity in those empty spaces would help a lot.”

“ Safety measures during evenings and nights. I now feel unsafe downtown alone during these times...”

What We Learned: Key Findings (2 of 2)

Downtown Needs to be Clean and Beautiful

Maintain sidewalks, add planters/flowers, and make sure that walking and parking areas are clear of trash.

Downtown Needs to be More Walkable

Improving streetscapes and adding infill development will make downtown feel more walkable and connected.

Keep Activating Downtown with Events

From Depot Park to Bo Diddley Plaza and the Streatery, events bring foot traffic to downtown and help support businesses.

More Convenient and Affordable Parking

The experience of parking downtown needs to be improved, including lighting, signage, pricing, and safety.

“ **Make it a more walkable city** and include diverse public transportation.”

“ **It really needs to be cleaned** and brightened up, not very welcoming downtown.”

“ **Building community is a huge one and what make Gainesville what it is.** I think the events that the How Bazar puts on, the Salsa/Bachata outside of The Bull...and Depot Parks events are essential to a lively and beautiful community.”

“ **Make it easier for small businesses to thrive by providing free accessible parking,** better lighting in parking areas, and reducing the extraneous gathering of people who are not actually patronizing the businesses.”

What We Learned: Key Findings

Provide Services for the Unhoused Population

There is a community-wide need for humane, real, and meaningful help for the unhoused. This investment will in return make downtown feel safer and more welcoming. Many note that the presence of the unhoused lead many neighbors to avoid walking in downtown altogether.

Address Vacancies & Support Businesses

Vacant storefronts make downtown feel empty and unsafe. The City should prioritize filling in these vacancies and supporting current businesses, with a focus on small businesses beyond bars and restaurants. Ideas includes incentives, subsidized rent, or improvement grants.

Safety is Key To Downtown's Success

Many survey participants expressed concerns rooted in a perceived lack of safety. Making downtown feel safer, whether from less vacancies, by servicing the unhoused, or by improving lighting in parking areas, will help bring more people to downtown.

Downtown Needs to be Clean and Beautiful

Maintain sidewalks, add planters/flowers, and make sure that walking and parking areas are clear of trash.

Downtown Needs to be More Walkable

Improving streetscapes and adding infill development will make downtown feel more walkable and connected.

Keep Activating Downtown with Events

From Depot Park to Bo Diddley Plaza and the Sreatery, events bring foot traffic to downtown and help support businesses.

More Convenient and Affordable Parking

The experience of parking downtown needs to be improved, including lighting, signage, pricing, and safety.



Lessons from the Downtown Strategic Plan

1,396

Needs Assessment Survey Responses (2024)

800+

Voices engaged in the Downtown Strategic Plan

Provide Services for the Unhoused Population

Address Vacancies & Support Businesses

Safety is Key To Downtown's Success

Downtown Needs to be Clean and Beautiful

Downtown Needs to be More Walkable

Keep Activating Downtown with Events

More Convenient and Affordable Parking

Become a Destination

Downtown needs to establish itself as a regional destination that attracts all Gainesville neighbors.

Connect the Dots

There is a lack of continuous walking, biking and transit connections in the downtown area.

Strengthen the Relationship with Adjacent Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods around downtown would like to preserve and enhance their existing character.

Increase Housing Opportunities

There is a lack of affordable and market-rate housing in the downtown area beyond student-oriented housing.

Create a Supportive Local Business Environment

Downtown needs a critical mass of locally owned businesses that support a vibrant local economy.

Maintain and Enhance Downtown

Establish an entity and implementable action plan to maintain and enhance downtown's assets.

Downtown Strategic Plan: 16 Ideas for Downtown



Become a Destination

- ▶ **Idea 1:** Build Investment Around Local Strengths
- ▶ **Idea 2:** Shape Downtown Identity
- ▶ **Idea 3:** Create a Downtown Jewel



Connect the Dots

- ▶ **Idea 4:** Balance the need for parking with the desire for a walkable, urban core.
- ▶ **Idea 5:** Prioritize Streets to Meet City Standards
- ▶ **Idea 6:** Activate the Sweetwater Corridor
- ▶ **Idea 7:** Create a Greenway Loop



Strengthen the Relationship with Adjacent Neighborhoods

- ▶ **Idea 8:** Connect Neighborhoods to Downtown
- ▶ **Idea 9:** Establish Transition Areas



Increase Housing Opportunities

- ▶ **Idea 10:** Address Housing at Scale
- ▶ **Idea 11:** Support Affordable and Mixed Income Housing
- ▶ **Idea 12:** Facilitate Market Rate Housing



Create a Supportive Local Business Environment

- ▶ **Idea 13:** Unlock Real Estate Potential
- ▶ **Idea 14:** Increase Direct Small Business Assistance



Maintain and Enhance Downtown

- ▶ **Idea 15:** Form a Place-Management Organization
- ▶ **Idea 16:** Continue to Build Capacity

Thank You & Discussion



MKSK