

Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan

TASK 1: Build on Local Strengths Engagement Summary

February 18, 2022

MKSK

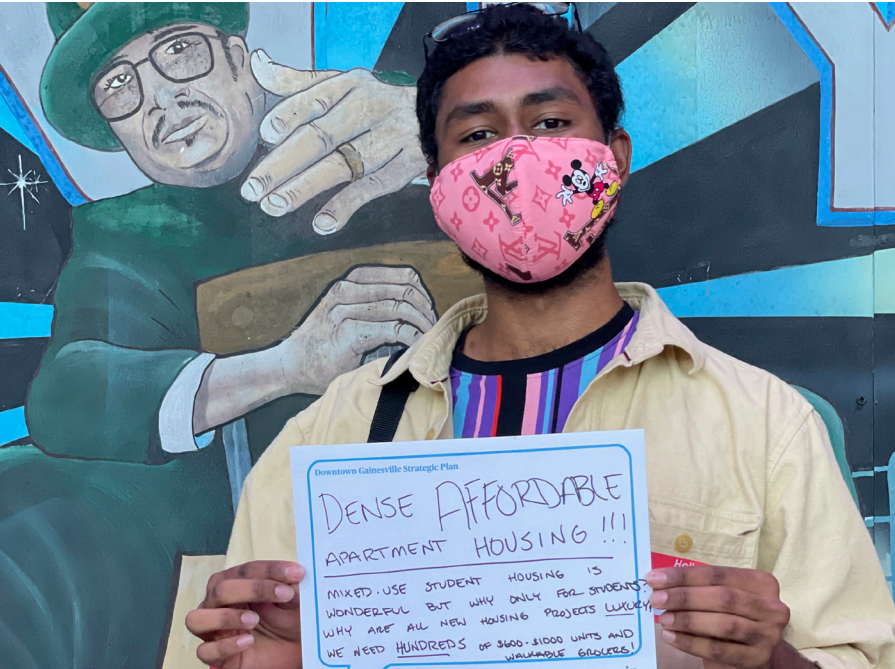
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A summary of our first phase of engagement

TASK 1 Build on Local Strengths Community Assets & Opportunities					TASK 2 Build For People Framework for Economic Opportunity & District Development						TASK 3 Build Long-Term Value Catalytic Projects & Value Capture		
▶ 2021					▶ 2022								
June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July



This engagement summary of the Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan encapsulates what we have heard from the hundreds of Gainesville neighbors who have participated in our process up to this point.

As we move into our second task of work and start drafting recommendations, we will use key findings introduced in this document as our guiding directive.

We will continue to engage Gainesville neighbors as we share draft recommendations and ideas to establish a vision for downtown. We thank you for your passion and dedication to this plan and hope you stay involved!

What's in this document



01

An overview of the Gainesville voices we have engaged thus far, their backgrounds, and their demographic makeup.

02

A summary of what we heard through public and stakeholder meetings, surveys, and one-on-one conversations.

03

Six key findings that represent hundreds of Gainesville voices and give us direction to draft the plan's recommendations.

Community Conversations (July to December 2021)

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS:

- 1 Community Meeting
- 2 updates to the GCRA Advisory Board
- 2 Neighbor Advisory Group Meetings
- 15 Stakeholder Focus Groups
- One-on-one conversations with Commissioners and stakeholders
- Online Surveys and Activities
- Paper surveys at community events (distributed 400 copies)
- Contacted community leaders in East Gainesville

700+

Total GNV voices engaged through this process thus far

70

Neighbors attended our Community Meeting

474

Neighbors responded to our Online Survey

63

Neighbors participated in our Online Activities

41

Neighbors filled out paper surveys

90

Stakeholders engaged in 15 focus groups

15

Neighbor Advisory Group Members

170

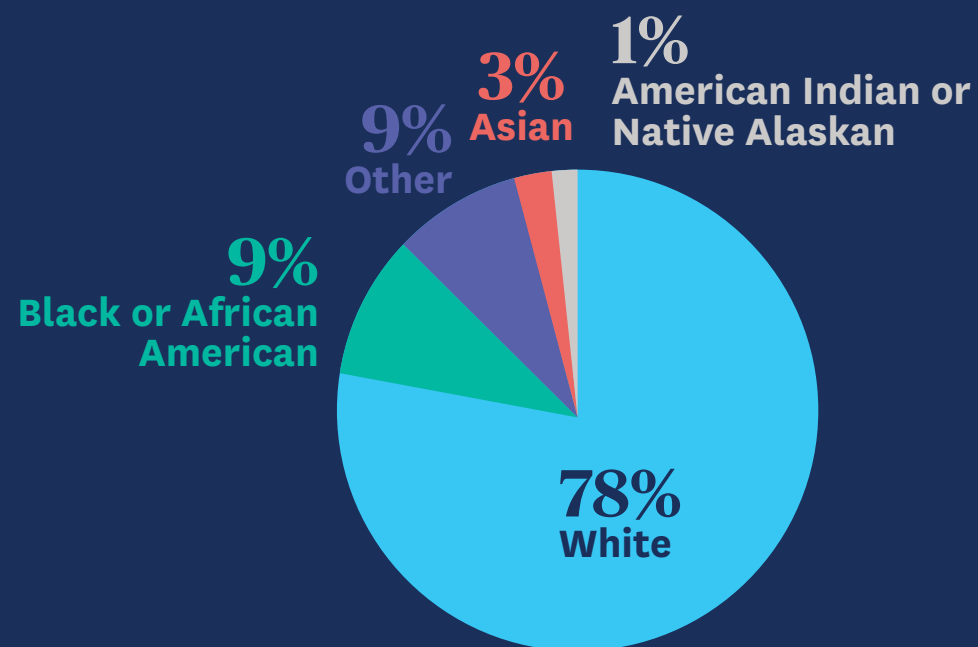
Comments through online activities on the project website

320

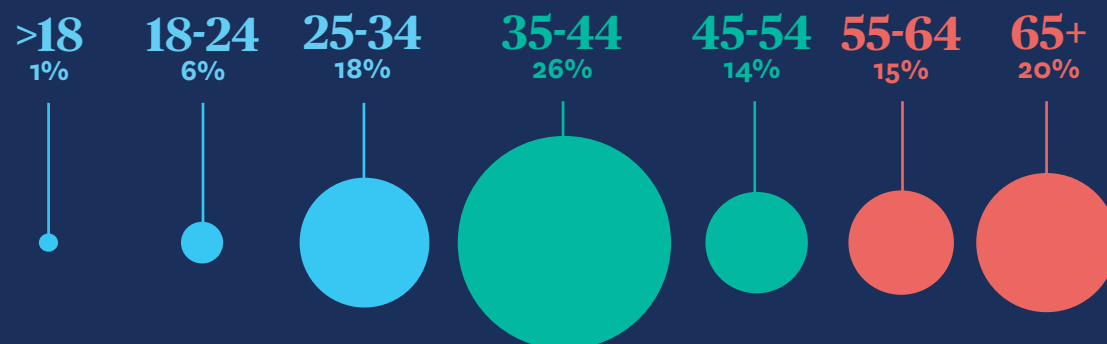
Comments on our meeting activities and boards

The Voices We Heard

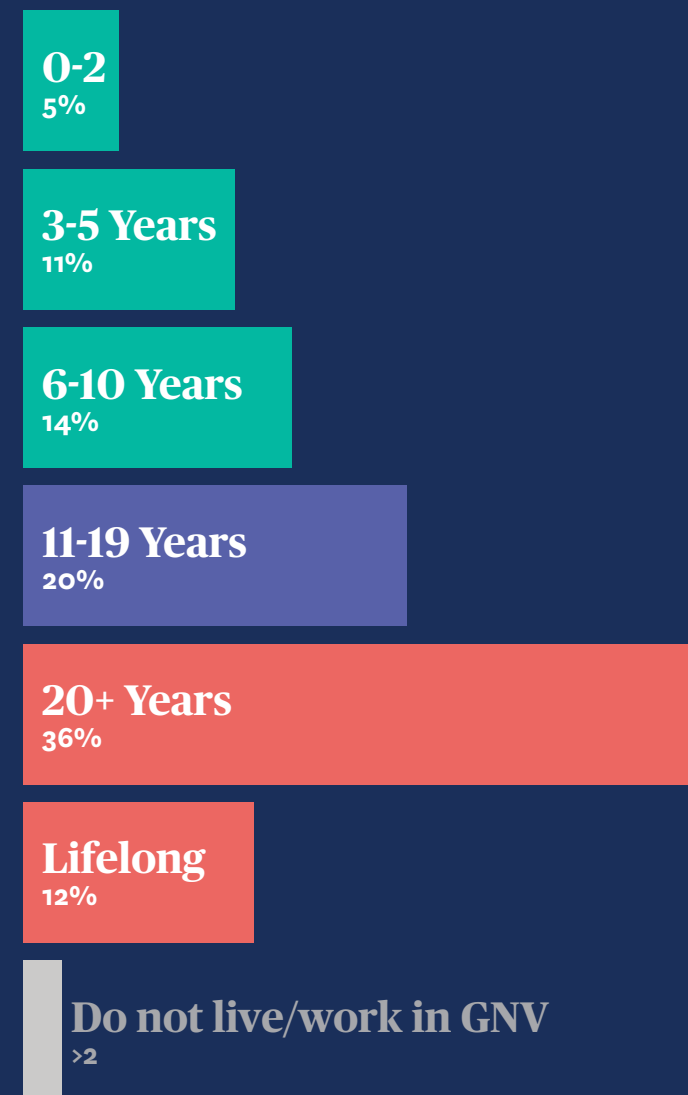
► Please describe your RACE



► What is your AGE?

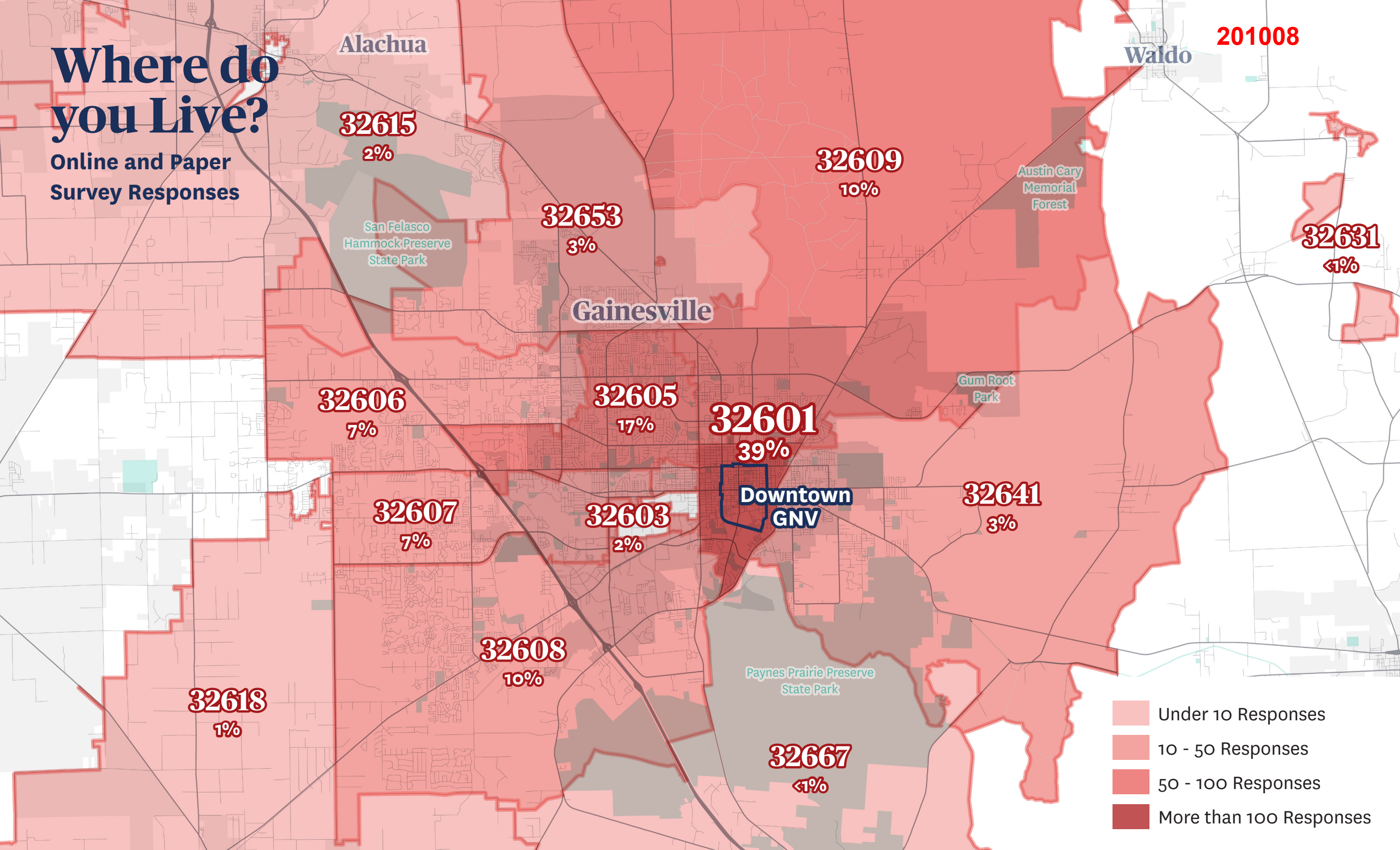


► How long have you LIVED/WORKED IN GNV?



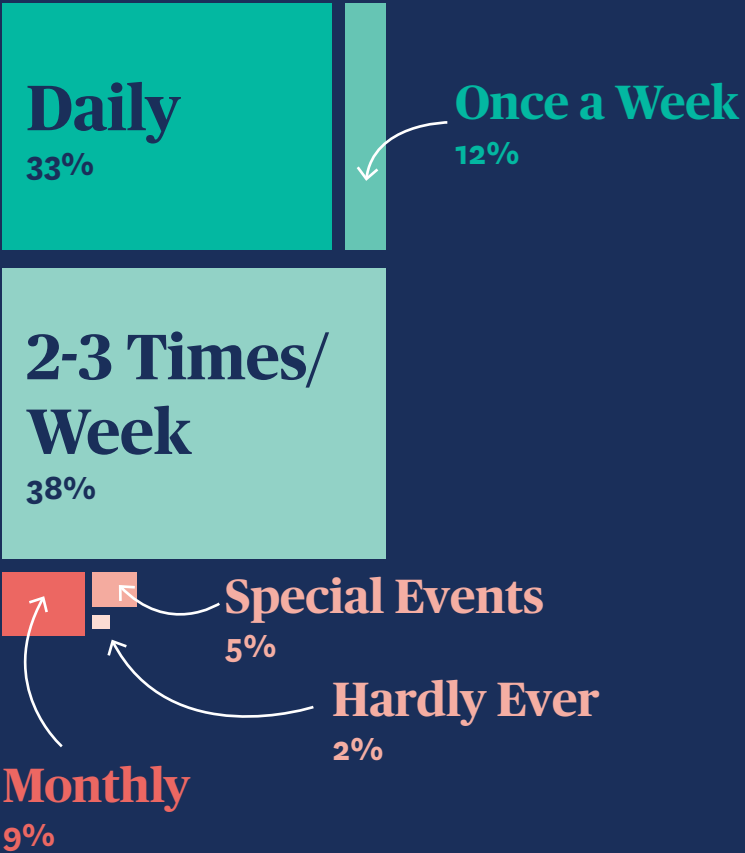
Where do you Live?

Online and Paper
Survey Responses

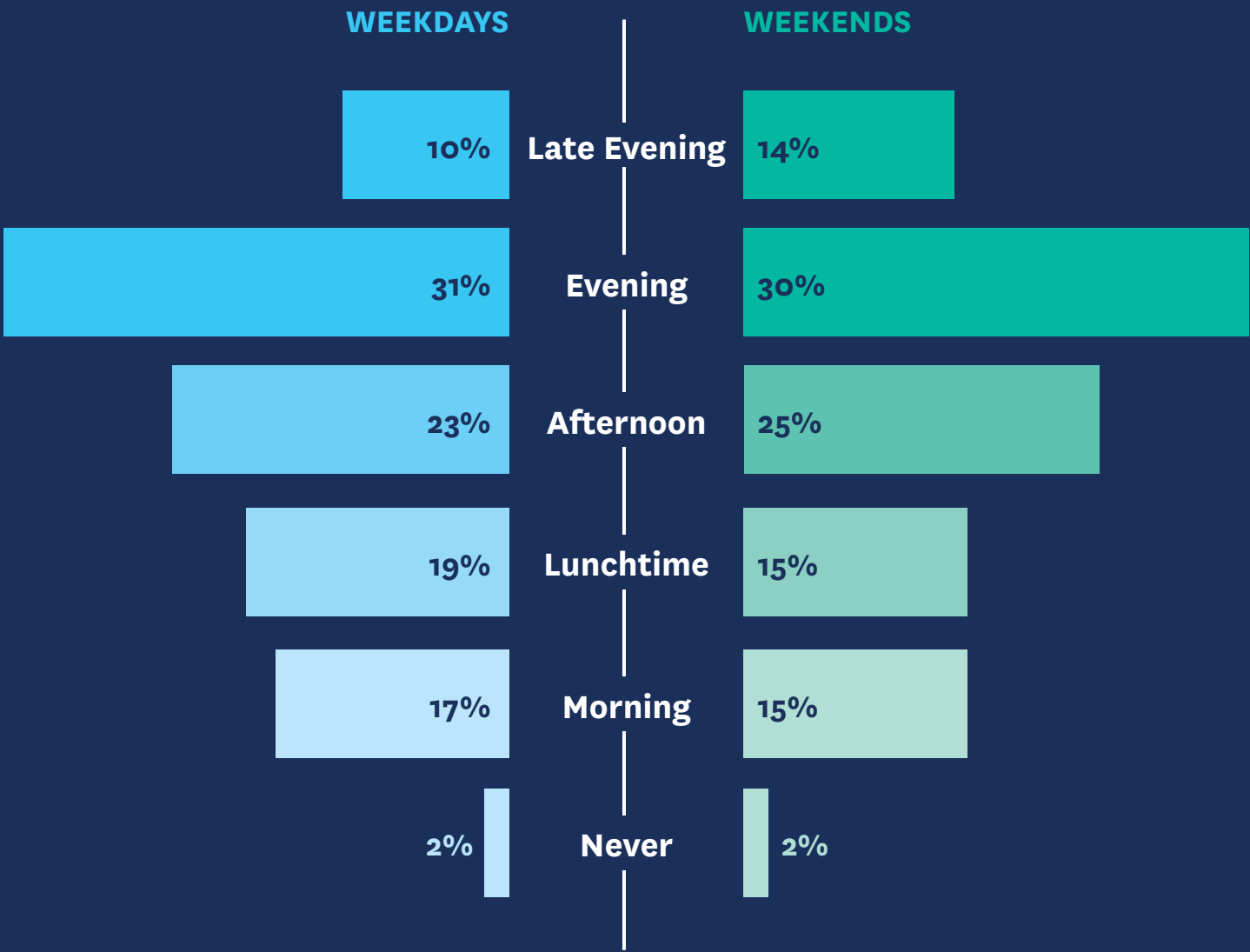


How Neighbors Experience Downtown

► HOW OFTEN do you visit downtown GNV?

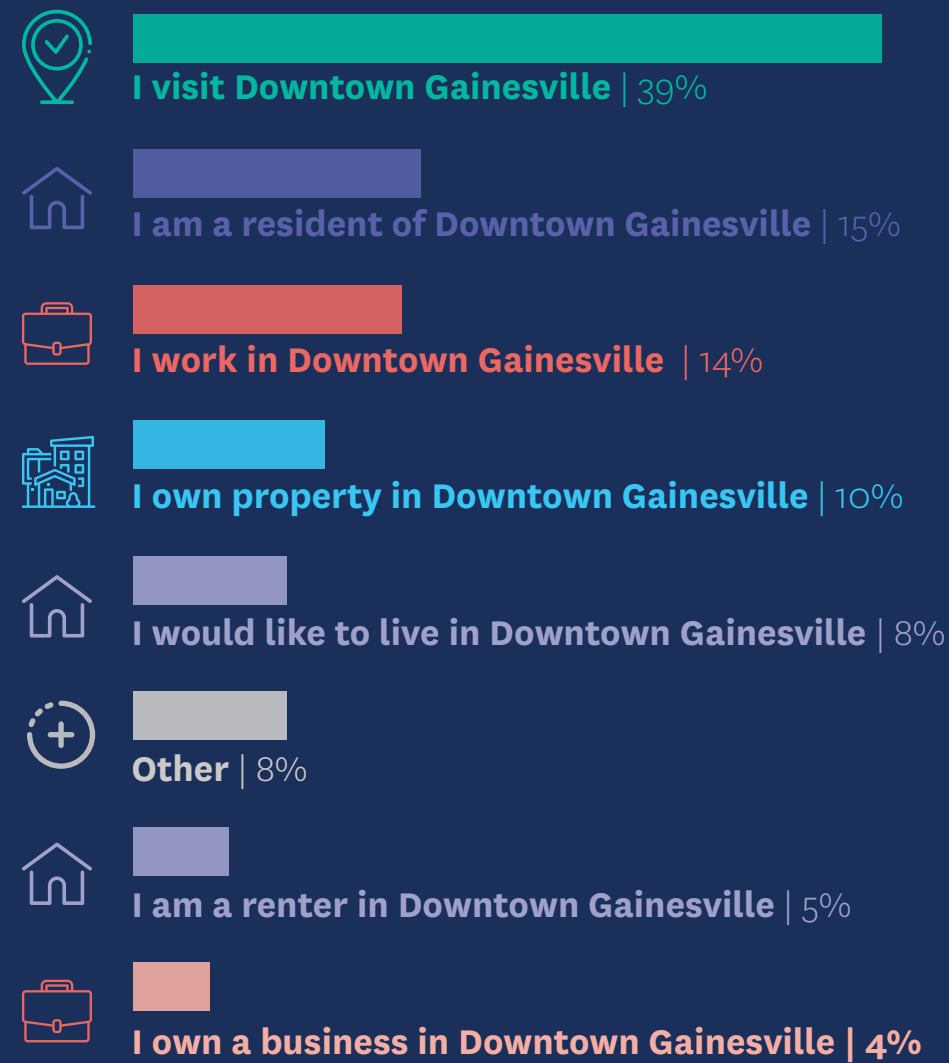


► WHEN do you usually visit downtown GNV?



How Neighbors Experience Downtown

► What BEST DESCRIBES you?



► What do YOU USUALLY DO in Downtown GNV?



What are your favorite places/things Downtown?



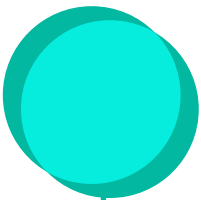
#1
Food/Restaurants



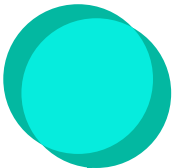
#2
Parks/Trees



#3
Walkable



#4
Arts/
Theater



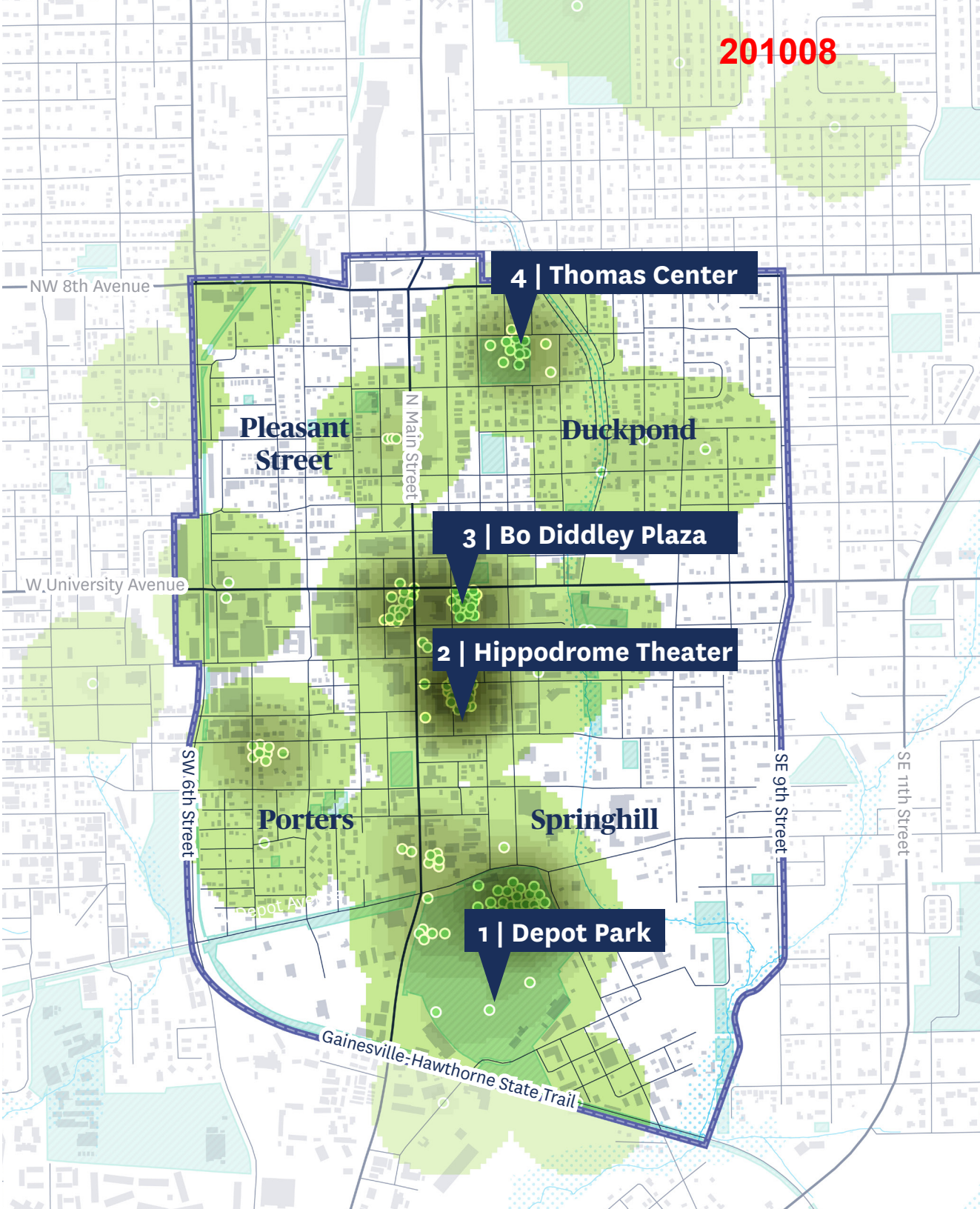
#5
Hippodrome
Theater



#6
Music



#7
Character/
History



What would you change/improve?

#1

Parking

“ Move parking to zoned areas that are nice to look at and not woven throughout Central Downtown. More pedestrian only areas.”

#2

Homelessness

“ House and solve. Homeless temporary housing to affordable housing pipeline.”

#3

More Businesses

“ More retail! Bookstores, hardware stores, boutiques, theater.”

#4

Pedestrian/Bike Options

#5

Public Safety/Lighting

Affordable Housing

Public Transit

Vehicle Traffic

Increased Programming

Grocery



What opportunities should we address?

“ Consider more year-round regular programming to attract visitors from citizens and visitors alike. Make downtown more accessible.”

#1
More
Businesses

#2
Ped/Bike
Options

#3
Affordable
Housing

#4
Parking

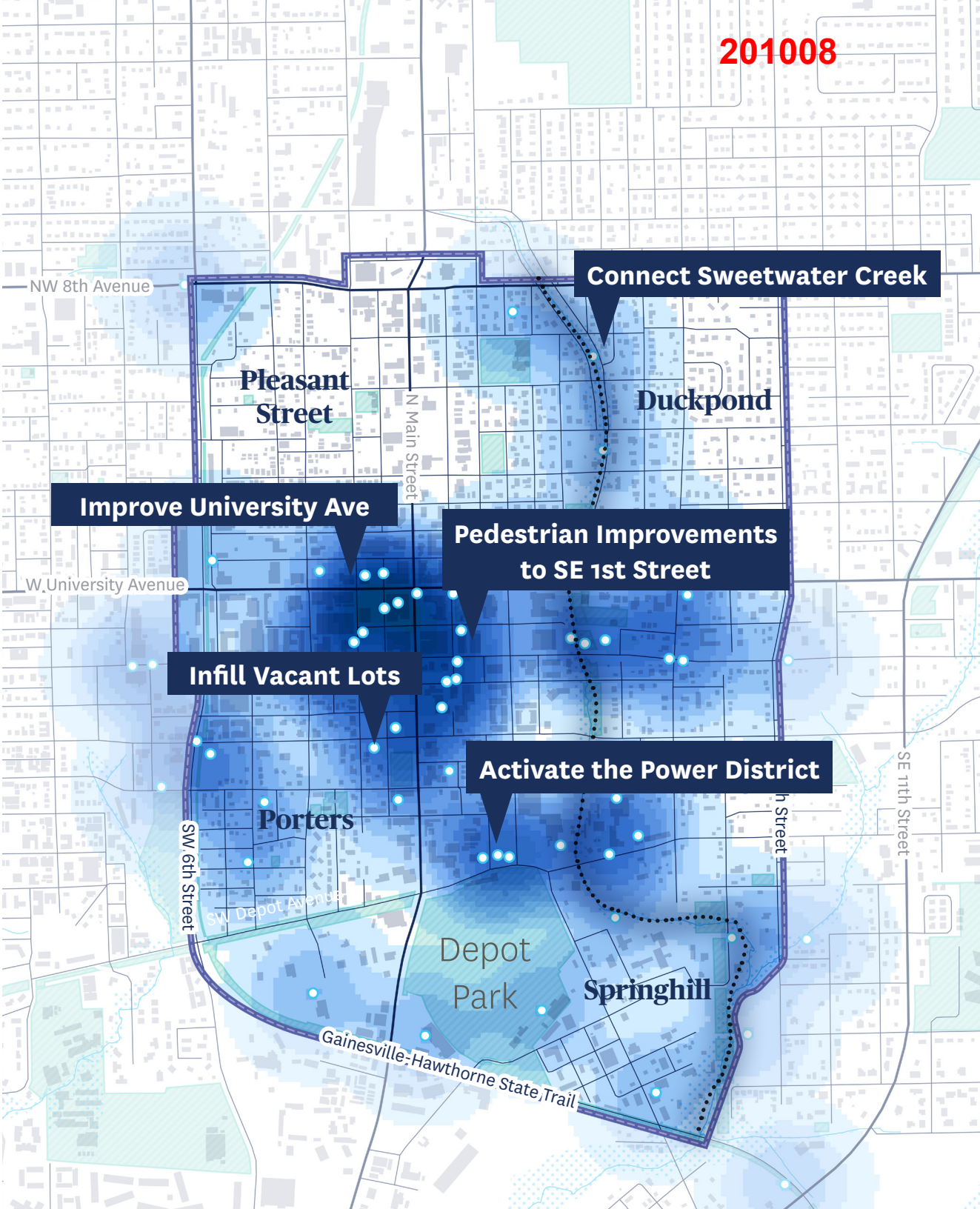
#5
Safety/
Lighting

#6
Transit

#7
Homelessness

“ Expand opportunities for unique and local businesses.”

OTHER THINGS WE HEARD: Increased Programming/Parks | Maintenance | Grocery | Vehicle Traffic | Infill Development | Zoning Concerns | Parks/Open Space

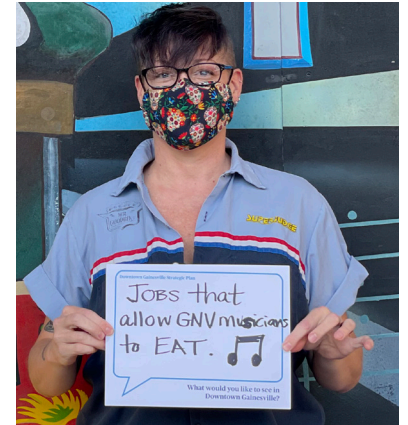
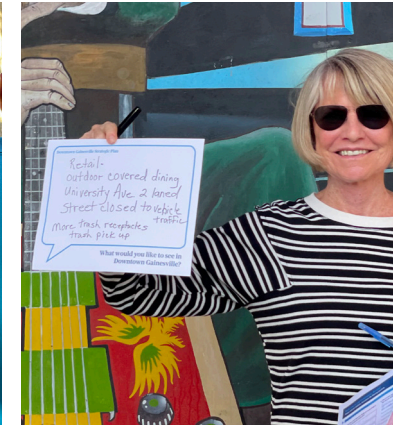
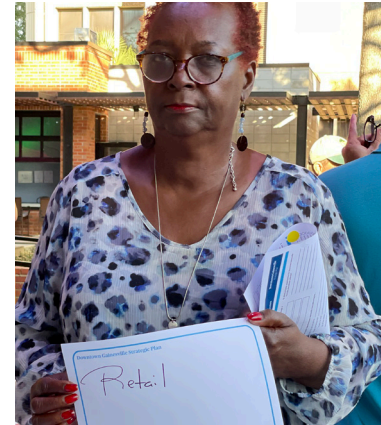


What Neighbors would Like to see Downtown

#1

More Businesses and Retail Options

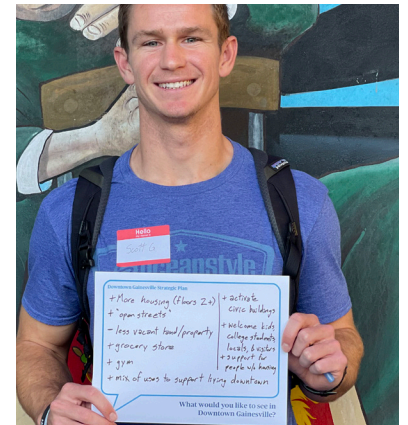
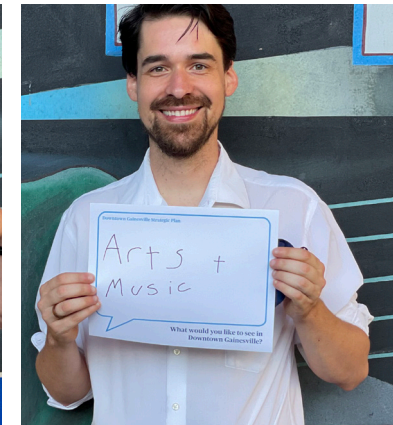
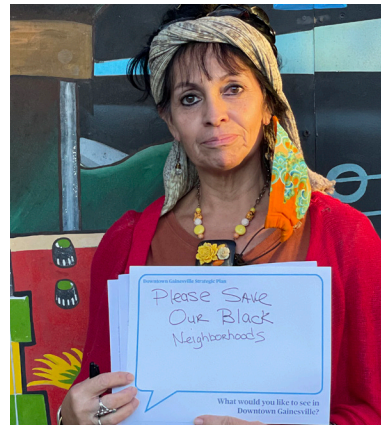
- “Evening retail! Mixed variety.”
- “Housing, grocery store, diverse commercial.”
- “Build economy for black business owners in predominately black neighborhoods.”



#2

More walkable and transit-friendly streets

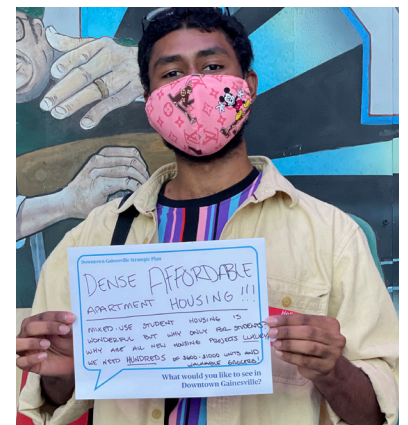
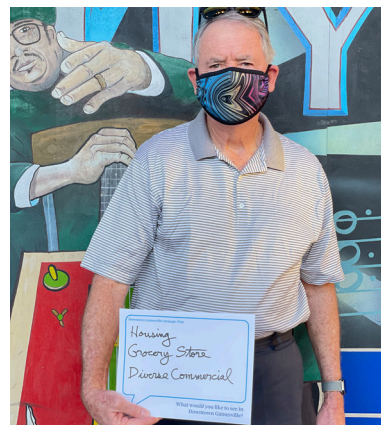
- “Calm speeds on University Ave. Wider Sidewalks.”
- “Pedestrian streets and walkability/cycling”



#3

Celebrate downtown's uniqueness and diversity

- “Stand out, don't be just like another American small town.”



#4

Parking concerns (both surplus and deficit)

Stakeholder Feedback

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

Downtown’s strengths are its walkability, diversity, authenticity, and destinations.

Density in and around downtown is associated with housing for UF students. Community members recognize that there is a need for more housing downtown that goes beyond products for students.

Downtown needs to reinvent itself and find a competitive niche to become viable, especially considering its local and regional competition, such as Celebration Pointe.

For downtown to be successful there needs to be a critical mass of local retail in a walkable environment. While downtown has the foundation for this to flourish, it feels dirty and littered.

A perceived lack of safety is exacerbated and augmented by a lack of lighting and the prevalence of a homeless population.

Connectivity is a big concern - there are gaps in walkability and bikability between downtown and its nearby assets.

A perceived lack of parking may be rooted in the fact that parking, though plentiful, is located in paid parking garages or within a short walk away from destinations.

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90+ Stakeholders Engaged in July/August	10+ Additional Stakeholders Engaged in 2022	
Neighborhood Leadership: Downtown, Porters, Duckpond, Springhill/Power District, Pleasant Street	Downtown Businesses	Educational Institutions
Emerging Leaders	Former Downtown Business Owners	Hospitality
Development and Real Estate	Arts and Culture	Planning and Design Professionals
Social Services	GCRA Advisory Board (GCRA members also attended various sessions)	City Staff (City Staff also attended various sessions)

What We Learned: Key Findings

STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

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

CONNECT THE DOTS

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

BECOME A DESTINATION

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

INCREASE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

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

ENHANCE AND MAINTAIN DOWNTOWN

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

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE LOCAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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

Ongoing Conversations

- ▶ Reversal of recently implemented changes to downtown parking fees.
- ▶ Ongoing concerns on safety and lighting.
- ▶ Homeless population in the downtown area.
- ▶ **The Downtown Strategic Plan Team has continued to meet with key stakeholders** following our last community meeting, including:
 - Santa Fe College
 - UF Innovate
 - AMJ Group Inc.
 - Mickle Family
 - Alachua County
 - Alachua County Public Schools
 - Downtown Business Watch



Immediate Next Steps

February 2022 - April 2022

- Draft Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan Recommendations and Concepts (February - March)
- Integrate with Imagine GNV and Zoning Review and Inclusionary Zoning Study (February)
- Community Meeting 2 (April)



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