

# **DOWNTOWN SANTA CRUZ ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN**

***WORKING PAPER***

**FEBRUARY 2020**



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## ABOUT THE DTA

The **Downtown Association of Santa Cruz (DTA)** was established in 1990 with the primary function of promoting Downtown. The non-profit 501 c 6 member-based organization manages a merchant-based Business Improvement District (BID), which includes approximately 700 businesses in Downtown. Assessments collected through a business license fee are used to fund marketing, promotions and events to bring people Downtown and create a positive experience while they are there. To support a clean, safe and welcoming environment, the DTA also staffs the Downtown Ambassador Program, a partnership between the DTA, Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) and the City of Santa Cruz Economic Development Department.

The DTA has an annual operating budget of approximately \$520,000, which includes a \$200,000 contract from the DMC for management of the Ambassador program. The DTA employs five staff members and is overseen by a 14-member Board of Directors representing downtown businesses.

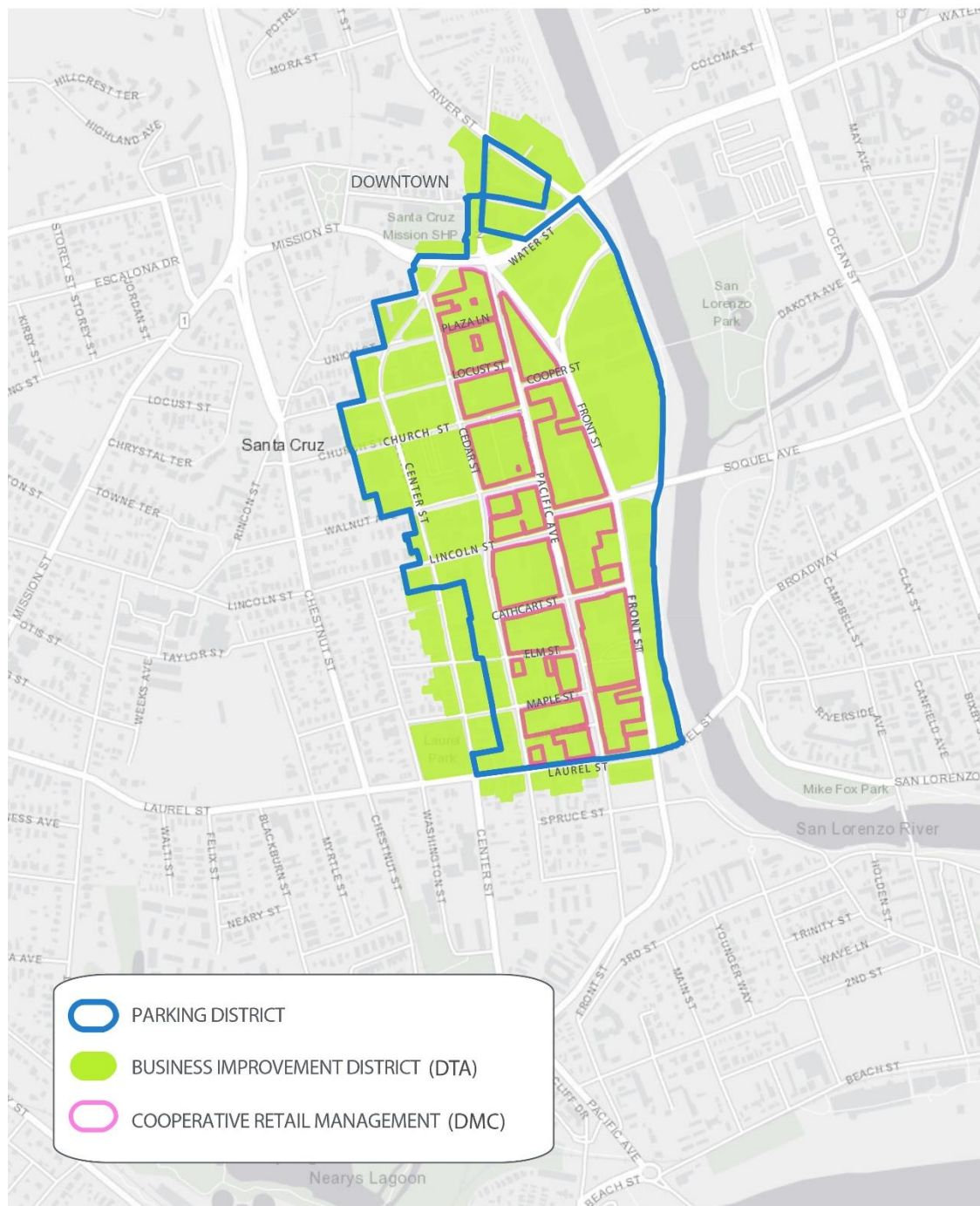
## ABOUT THE DMC

The **Downtown Management Corporation (DMC)** is a non-profit 501 c 3 organization formed in 1994 to manages an assessment on real property in the downtown core, along Pacific Avenue. Assessment revenue, amounting to approximately \$200,000, is used to promote a clean, safe and friendly atmosphere Downtown and primarily funds the Ambassador Program that is managed by the DTA. The DMC is overseen by a 9-person Board of Directors consisting of property owners, business owners, City Council representatives, and the Director of Economic Development. The DMC is staffed by the City's Economic Development Department.

## PARKING DISTRICT AND DEFICIENCY FEE

Business in Downtown Santa Cruz that are within the Parking District are required to provide a standard number of parking spaces based on their square footage and use type. A **parking deficiency fee** is charged for each required parking space that is not met on site. The deficiency fee raises approximately \$800,000 a year, which is put towards developing and operating Downtown public parking. The City is shifting to a user-supported parking program, which will raise the cost of monthly parking permits and increase the costs at meters. The parking deficiency fee will sunset over five years and fully eliminated by January 2023.

## EXISTING DOWNTOWN SANTA CRUZ DISTRICTS



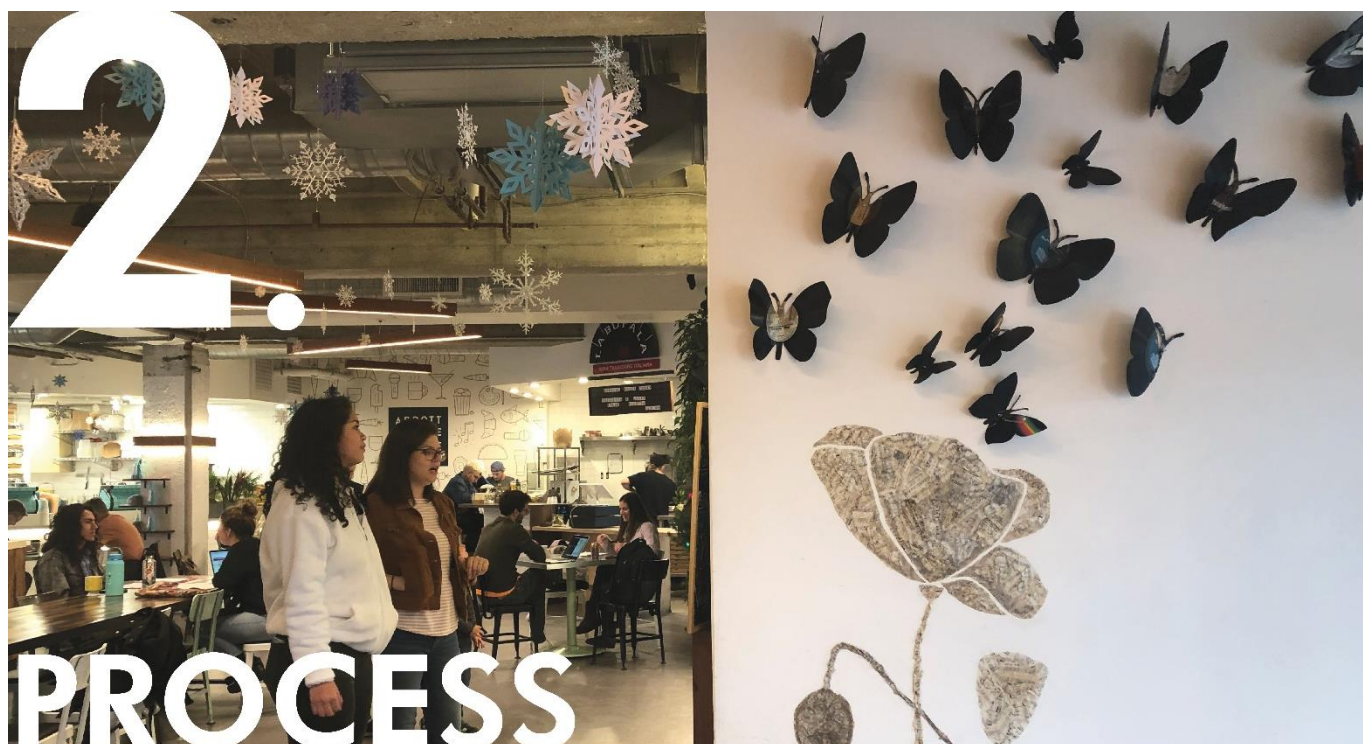
## STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN PURPOSE

This strategic organizational plan was led by a partnership of the City of Santa Cruz, DTA and DMC, **to assess the existing downtown management structure and provide recommendations that bring Downtown Santa Cruz in line with national best practices that address the most pressing needs in Downtown today.** To facilitate the strategic planning process, Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) was contracted by the City of Santa Cruz. P.U.M.A. brings more than 30 years of experience in downtown strategic planning, BID and PBID management and development.

Specifically, this strategic plan intends to:

1. Engage a broad range of Downtown stakeholders to understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in Downtown Santa Cruz;
2. Assess the capacity of existing Downtown entities, namely the DTA and DMC, to effectively address these challenges and make the most of opportunities; and
3. Provide recommendations to strengthen the management of Downtown Santa Cruz, including adjustments to organizational structure, work program, budget, and boundaries.





At the onset of the strategic planning process, a **X-member** Project Steering Committee was created to help guide and inform the process. The Steering Committee, which represented diverse interests and perspectives on Downtown, was consulted at each stage of the process. A full list of Steering Committee members can be found in the Acknowledgement section of the Appendix.

## ORIENTATION

To get acquainted with Downtown Santa Cruz, the P.U.M.A. team reviewed past and current organizational materials, and relevant plans and studies pertaining to Downtown. During an initial site visit in August 2019, P.U.M.A. toured Downtown and met with approximately 50 stakeholders, representing a variety of interests: civic, business, arts, development, property, and City departments to get a better understanding of Downtown dynamics. P.U.M.A. also met with the DTA Board of Directors and the Project Steering Committee to set expectations for the planning process.

## OUTREACH

In September 2019, the P.U.M.A. team was back in Santa Cruz for three days of intensive outreach, which included seven roundtable discussions (with a total of approximately 100 participants), one-on-one interviews, and meetings with City leadership, the DMC Board of Directors, and the Steering Committee. Findings from this outreach helped to inform an online survey, which was broadly distributed, in both English and Spanish, and received over 3,000 responses.

## ALTERNATIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS

After synthesizing input from Downtown stakeholders, including the project team, P.U.M.A. prepared a first draft of a strategic organizational plan working paper that outlined two alternative scenarios for the management of Downtown Santa Cruz. These scenarios were vetted with the Steering Committee, representatives from the DTA and DMC boards, property owners, City department heads and the Mayor. Based on this feedback, **and additional outreach conducted in February 2020**, a final recommendation was put forth.



# ENGAGEMENT

Engaging a broad and diverse group of stakeholders was a key to this process. This included approximately 150 participants in one-on-one, small group, and roundtable discussions, plus 3,178 responses to an online survey. Participants included property owners, businesses, non-profit and arts organizations, major employers, residents, employees and visitors. In addition, P.U.M.A. met with City leadership, the DTA and DMC Boards of Directors, and the Project Steering Committee to share community feedback and received input on recommendations as they were developed.

## KEY FINDINGS

### STRENGTHS

There are many aspects of Downtown Santa Cruz that are a source of pride for the community. Common themes include:

- **Vibrancy** – Downtown is buzzing with activity and has a wide range of offerings including arts, special events, sports, and local retail and restaurants. Abbott Square was commonly cited as the de-facto town square, as it is an important community asset and gathering place.
- **Unique Local Businesses** – Downtown has a strong retail and restaurant mix and is full of unique, independent businesses that differentiate Santa Cruz from other communities. Downtown is a destination for visitors from the wider region.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Scale** – Downtown is compact and easy to navigate as a pedestrian. Streets, in particular Pacific Ave, provide wide sidewalks and activated ground floors.
- **Natural Beauty** – Santa Cruz has a pleasant year-round climate and Downtown is in close proximity to many natural amenities, including the beach, redwoods, and the San Lorenzo River, which runs adjacent to Downtown.

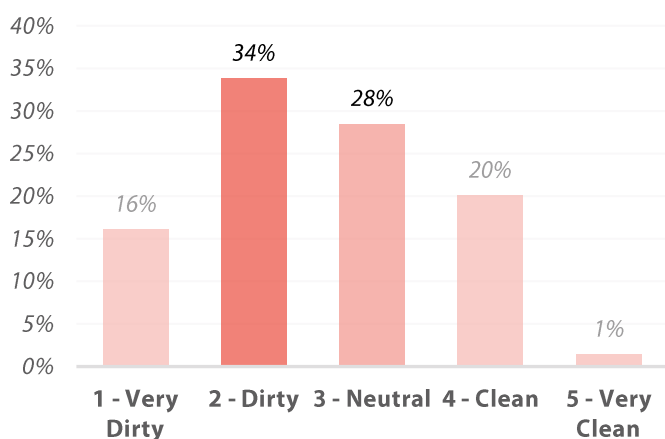
## CHALLENGES

Common challenges cited throughout the community engagement process include:

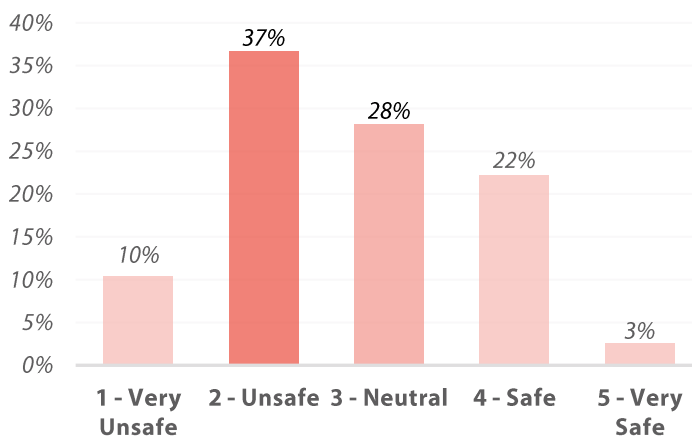
- **Homelessness, Mental Health Behaviors, and Drug Use** - the homelessness crisis is impacting downtowns across the country, including Santa Cruz, and there is concern among Downtown stakeholders that the issue is growing worse. There is also seemingly a growing population of people Downtown who are exhibiting disruptive behaviors related to mental health and/or alcohol and drug use issues.
- **Safety Concerns** - there are real and perceived issues of safety Downtown, particularly expressed by employees and employers on behalf of their employees. Late evening and early morning were the times of most concern.
- **Negative Perceptions** – there is concern among stakeholders that Downtown is losing the local market. There is a common perception, perpetuated by negative press, that Downtown is dirty and unsafe. Increasing competition within the region, from places like Aptos and Capitola, make Downtown feel vulnerable.
- **One Street Downtown** – While Pacific Ave. is the widely celebrated core of Downtown, there is a desire from stakeholders to expand the vibrancy Pacific exudes, to adjacent Front and Cedar Streets and Pacific Ave. south of Laurel Street.
- **Parking and Mobility** – Santa Cruz, like many downtowns, is seeking the right balance between providing adequate parking (some cite a lack of supply) and enhancing practical alternatives to driving (some cite the need for more bike parking).

The online survey asked participants about their perception of cleanliness and safety in Downtown Santa Cruz today. The results are shown in the charts below, which indicate a perception among the majority of the 3,000 plus respondents, that Downtown Santa Cruz is not particularly clean or safe. On a 1-to-5 scale, the average rating of safety in Downtown Santa Cruz today is a 2.7 and cleanliness is a 2.6.

**Cleanliness in Downtown - Scale of 1-to-5**



**Safety in Downtown - Scale of 1-to-5**



## IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Based on feedback from the roundtable discussions and the online survey, priority improvements can largely be grouped into the following three categories:

### Clean, Safe, and Welcoming

- Supplemental maintenance to provide a consistently clean experience Downtown;
- Enhanced safety Downtown, especially during evening and early morning hours; and
- Additional outreach services for populations who are experiencing homelessness, in addition to support for those with mental health issues.

### Economic Vitality

- Local business support to help retain and grow unique retailers in Downtown;
- Public space activation to enliven spaces like parks, plazas, and the riverfront; and
- Education, research and advocacy on policies and initiatives that are important for Downtown, such as housing, parking management, and improved mobility alternatives.

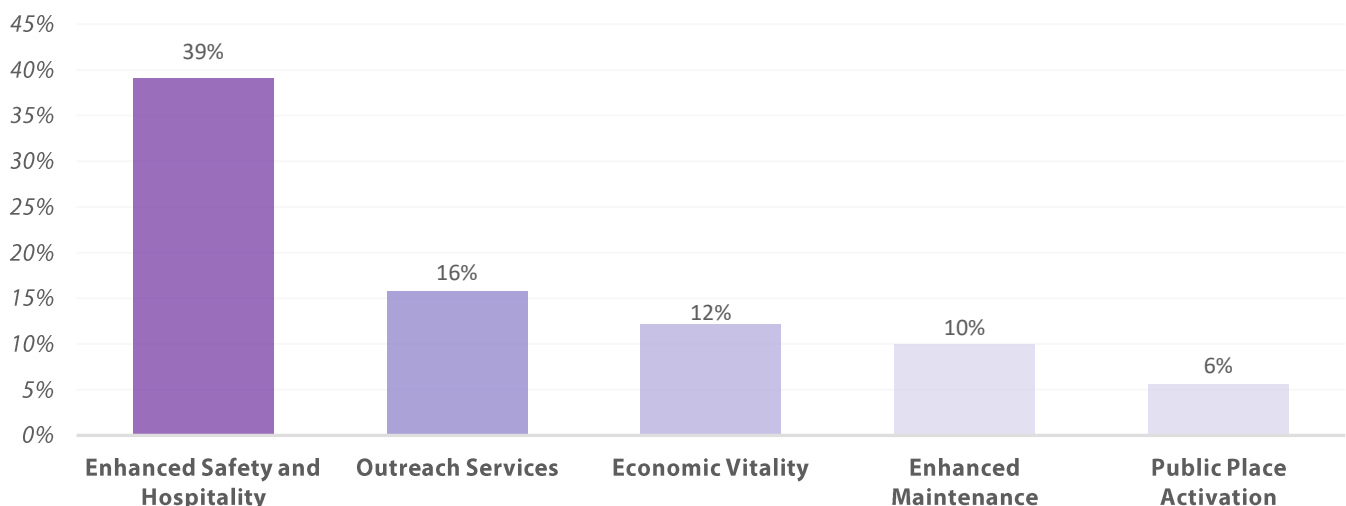
### Marketing and Image

- Pro-active marketing and PR to help change negative perceptions of Downtown.

### Most Important Action

- Survey participants were asked to select the ONE most important service for Downtown based on a list of 14 options, including the option to say 'other'. The top five services selected are shown in the chart below. With a strong demand indicated for enhanced clean, safe and welcoming services.

*What is the **MOST** Important Action for Downtown?*



## VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Based on a visioning exercise completed with the Project Steering Committee and the online survey, which asked participants to offer three words that best describe their vision for Downtown Santa Cruz in the future (2024), the following vision framework was constructed. This provides a starting point for a future Downtown Vision and Master Planning process.

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**Clean & Safe** Downtown is an attractive place that is consistently clean and safe for all.

**Welcoming** Downtown provides a **friendly** and hospitable environment for all.

**Vibrant** Downtown is a dynamic place that is fun and buzzing with activity. Downtown businesses, property owners, arts venues, nonprofits and others are **thriving**.

**Inclusive** Downtown is a tight knit **community**, where **diversity** and inclusion are valued and celebrated.

**Cherished** Downtown is a treasure for locals and visitors from throughout the region and beyond.

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## **NEW REALITIES FOR DOWNTOWN**

Downtown has evolved over the thirty years since the DTA and DMC were formed and it is a different reality in Downtown Santa Cruz today. Downtown is growing, with significant new residential development in the pipeline and new businesses bringing more employees downtown. Additionally, development occurring south of Laurel Street is pushing what was traditionally thought of as the downtown boundary, further south. There are growing challenges of affordability for residents and businesses and, similar to many communities throughout California and the county, there is a growing population that is experiencing homelessness and increasing mental health issues. As noted through stakeholder engagement, top priorities are to better address the clean and safe fundamentals Downtown.

The management and resource needs of Downtown have significantly outpaced the growth in resources of the DTA and DMC, meaning programs are largely underfunded and not as effective as they could be. The City of Santa Cruz, along with a variety of non-profit organizations, provide numerous clean, safe and welcoming services Downtown. While intentions are good, the system is vulnerable and could benefit from a better-funded downtown management organization, with the capacity to help coordinate among City departments and other service providers, and augment services.

Given current realities, there is an opportunity and a need to rethink the organizational management of Downtown to improve the viability of the district by providing a well-managed, maintained and marketed environment for all.

## **PROPERTY-BASED BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS**

The International Downtown Association estimates that more than 1,000 property-based business improvement districts (PBIDs) currently operate throughout North America. Since the creation of California's Property and Business Improvement District Law in 1994, more than 100 PBIDs have been established in California downtowns and other commercial districts, including Berkeley, Santa Monica and San Jose. PBIDs are a self-imposed, self-governed financing mechanism used to provide revenue for improvements and activities, such as safety, maintenance, economic vitality and image enhancements, that are in addition to those provided by local government.

## BENEFITS OF A PBID

- ✓ Can provide many types of enhanced services, but generally focused on clean, safe and economic vitality
- ✓ Reliable source of revenue; can leverage other funding for downtown improvements
- ✓ Costs relate directly to benefits, so are inherently fair
- ✓ Able to raise more funds than business-based improvement districts (BIDs)
- ✓ Easier to administer than BIDs
- ✓ Stakeholders generally satisfied with services provided; renewal rate of 99%

*A new PBID designed for the current realities of Downtown Santa Cruz could help broaden the concept of Downtown, create alignment between property and business owners, strengthen partnership with the City, and allocate new resources for enhanced services desired by the community.*

## ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

Two alternative downtown management scenarios were explored with stakeholders during a P.U.M.A. visit in December 2019. **Scenario A** proposed to dissolve the DMC and the DTA and create a new PBID for Downtown Santa Cruz. **Scenario B** proposed to dissolve the DMC and create a new PBID for Downtown, while maintaining the DTA.

In California there are examples of both models. In Downtown Berkeley, two districts were consolidated into one PBID. The Berkeley PBID provides clean and safe services, as well as marketing and events, which were previously provided by a BID. Downtown Santa Monica retained both a PBID and a BID. The PBID provides clean, safe, and economic vitality services and the BID provides marketing and special events. There are pros and cons to each scenario.

### SCENARIO A: DISSOLVE THE DMC AND DTA; CREATE NEW PBID

Pros	Cons
Additional funds available to augment existing programs and address new Downtown needs	Business owners have less representation on the PBID governing board than on the DTA board
Streamlined organizational structure – one district with one board of directors	PBID is not guaranteed to be renewed in future
Eliminates potential for business owners to pay twice	
Reduces potential for overlapping services	

### SCENARIO B: DISSOLVE THE DMC; RETAIN THE DTA; CREATE NEW PBID

Pros	Cons
Additional funds available to augment existing programs and address new Downtown needs	A more complex organizational structure for Downtown Santa Cruz
Maintains the stability of the DTA Board of Directors	Potential for businesses to pay twice – DTA costs, plus a pass-through of PBID costs if using a NNN lease
Establishes a clear divide between the clean, safe and economic vitality services provided by the PBID and the marketing and events produced by the DTA.	Potential for redundancy without strong oversight and coordination
	More difficult to administer the assessment (two separate processes)



## SCENARIO A

Feedback from stakeholders and the Project Steering Committee, indicated a strong preference for Scenario A, in which both of the existing Downtown entities, the DTA and the DMC, would be dissolved and a new PBID would be created for Downtown Santa Cruz. Stakeholders preference for Scenario A included the following rationale:

- ✓ One organization is more efficient than two
- ✓ A better coordinated, streamlined approach
- ✓ Stronger voice together than separate
- ✓ Need for change and a fresh start!

A **Management Plan in the Appendix** provides full detail on how a PBID in Downtown Santa Cruz would operate. Below is a summary of services, budget, governance, and boundary.

## SERVICES

The enhanced services provided by the PBID, relate directly to the priorities identified by Downtown stakeholders and will enhance the Downtown experience for property owners, businesses, residents, employees, and visitors. These services fall largely into three categories: "Clean, Safe, and Welcoming", "Economic Vitality", and "Marketing and Image". Economic Vitality and Marketing are provided evenly throughout the District. Clean, Safe and Welcoming services are also provided throughout the District but the frequency varies by zone. Three zones are proposed to account for the different service level needs.

## **CLEAN, SAFE, AND WELCOMING**

- Downtown Ambassador Program – to provide friendly faces and extra clean and safe support throughout the District. Having additional resources through the PBID, the existing Ambassador program can be expanded and professionally managed by a service contractor such as Streetsplus or Block by Block.
- Maintenance Services – to supplement and enhance existing City services by providing service during evenings and weekends, with concentrated maintenance (e.g. spot cleaning) as needed.
- Outreach Workers – to provide extra support for those with mental health issues and to help connect people experiencing homelessness with resources. These outreach workers will be additive and focused solely within the PBID boundary.
- A PBID Operations Manager will oversee the above services and help to coordinate among the City, County, PBID and other service providers.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY**

- Local Business Support – to provide technical assistance, permitting, navigating City processes, and proactive tenanting. Intentional support of businesses both on and off of Pacific Ave.
- Public Place Activation – to assist in programming and family-friendly activities that enliven public spaces like Downtown parks, plazas and the riverfront.
- Research and Education – to advise on and support policies that impact Downtown; this may include topics such as housing, parking management, and alternative mobility solutions.
- Special Projects and Planning – to engage in various projects and planning initiatives, such as partnering with the City to initiate a Comprehensive Downtown Vision and Master Plan.
- A PBID Economic Vitality Manager will oversee the above services.

## **MARKETING AND IMAGE**

- Marketing and Communications – to support the PBID's activities and pro-actively promote a positive image of Downtown. This could include maintaining a website, business directory, and promotions like Downtown Dollars.
- Special Events – to encourage people to come and enjoy Downtown. Existing events produced or supported by the DTA may be continued through the PBID.
- A PBID Marketing Manager will oversee the above services. The PBID will also staff the Downtown visitor kiosk.

## **BASE LEVEL CITY SERVICES**

PBID services are intended to augment City services, not replace them. Therefore, the City of Santa Cruz has established a base level services document to account for the services it currently provides within the proposed PBID boundary, which it will continue to provide through the duration of the District.

## BUDGET

A proposed year one budget for the PBID is recommended at \$1.3 million. This matches the collective budget of approximately \$300,000 from the DTA, \$200,000 from the DMC, and \$800,000 from the parking deficiency fee. To ease transition to the new PBID, it could be considered whether the parking deficiency fee's sunset could be accelerated to coincide with the formation of the new district.

## GOVERNANCE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Decisions related to the PBID, including annual work programs, budgets and assessments, will be made by the PBID Board of Directors. A Board of 15 to 19 members is recommended. A majority (no less than 50%) of the Board will be composed of property owners within the PBID. Property owners should represent:

- All geographic areas served by the PBID
- A variety of property types including retail, office, residential
- Both large and small property owners

At least one third of the members are business owners, of various sizes, that do not own property. Additionally, the PBID Board of Directors will include the City Manager or his/her designee.

Ex Officio members could represent City departments such as public works, police, and parking.

### COMMITTEES

The PBID will utilize a committee structure that represents each of the three categories of service: Clean, Safe and Welcoming, Economic Vitality, and Marketing and Image. Each committee will include a mix of board members and non-board members, with relevant expertise.

It is envisioned that the Marketing and Image Committee is largely made up of representation from the former DTA Board of Directors.

### ORGANIZATION

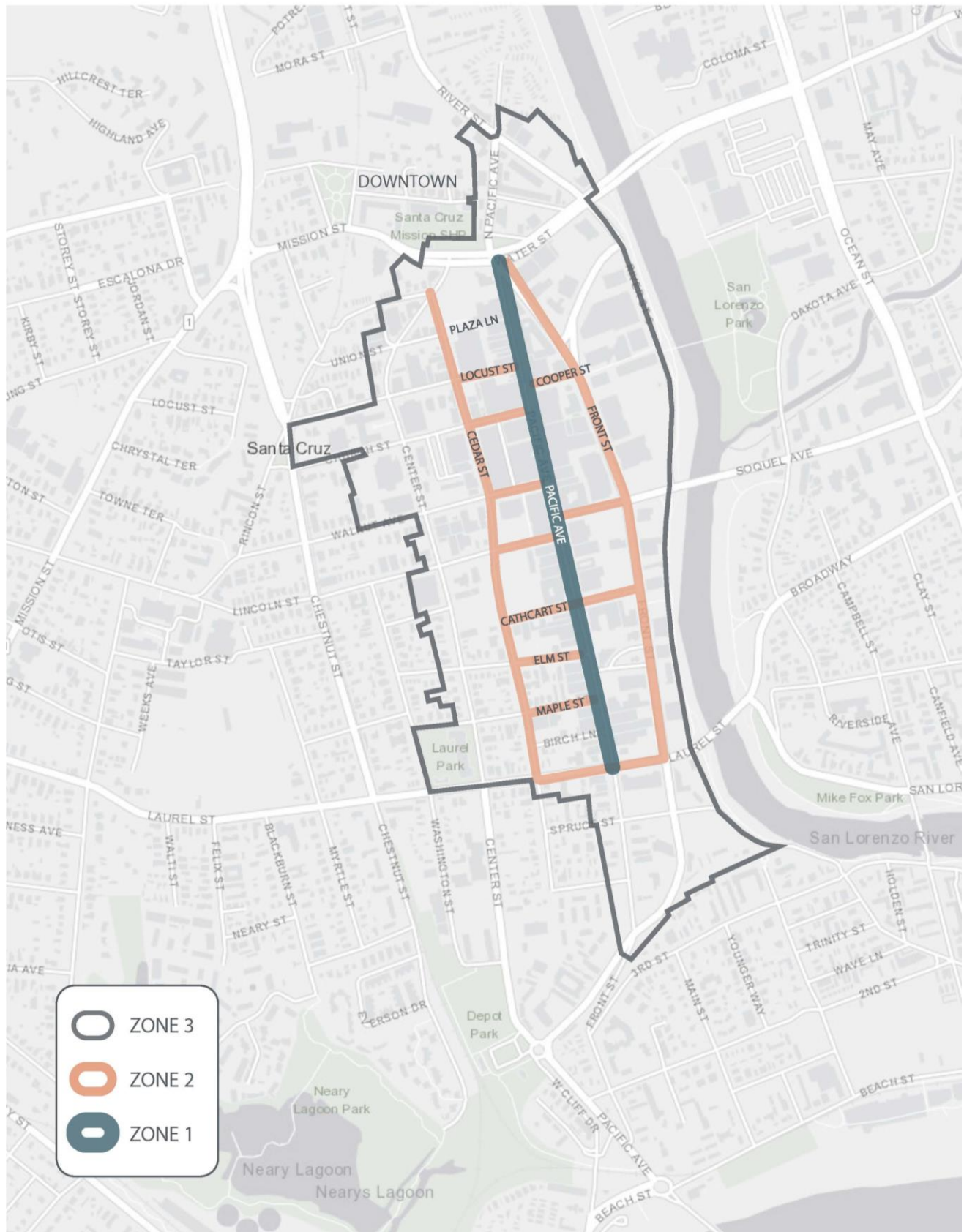
With the DTA and DMC being dissolved, a new non-profit organization will need to be formed. It is recommended that the PBID contract staff through a new non-profit 501 c6 organization, the **Santa Cruz Downtown Partnership**, providing a fresh start and new brand for the downtown management organization.

At a future date, the formation of a non-profit 501 c3 affiliate could be considered. 501 c3s are commonly used within downtown management organizations to diversify funding beyond assessments, through grants, sponsorships and other contributions. Such revenues can then be used to fund things like planning studies, public space enhancements, and other special projects.

## BOUNDARY

The proposed boundary for the PBID extends beyond the DMC boundary to incorporate side streets where stakeholders have indicated a desire for more vitality and where additional services. The boundary expands south of Laurel Street to include an area with significant new development. A proposed boundary map, indicating the three benefit zones, is provided below.

# PROPOSED SANTA CRUZ PBID BOUNDARY





It is recommended that a PBID formation process be initiated. In order for the Downtown Santa Cruz PBID to have a start-up date of January 1, 2021, the formation process needs to adhere to the following schedule:

Formation Schedule	Dates: 2020
Petitions distributed to property owners	March
Information campaign to obtain signed petitions: presentations, meetings, City Council work-session	March - April
City Council adopts resolution of intention	Early May
Assessment ballots mailed to property owners	Mid May
City Council holds public hearing, tabulates ballots, and considers approving an ordinance to form the district	Late June



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Project Steering Committee, DTA and DMC Boards of Directors, DTA staff, the City of Santa Cruz Economic Development Department, City leadership and the 3,000+ stakeholders who participated in this planning effort to improve the management of Downtown.

### **Project Steering Committee Members:**

- Valerie Moselle, Committee Chair
- Stuyvie Barnes Estava
- Crystal Birns
- Patrice Boyle
- Piet Canin
- Zach Davis
- Kendra Dosenbach
- Frost (Chris) Frost
- Tim Gordin
- Jonathan Hicken
- Linnaea Holgers James
- Owen Lawlor
- Suna Lock
- Anne Martinete
- Greg Pepping
- Patrick Prindle
- Casey Protti
- Kris Reyes
- Margaret Rosas

# DOWNTOWN SANTA CRUZ | ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

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An online survey was developed as part of a strategic planning process led by the Downtown Association of Santa Cruz (DTA), the Downtown Management Corporation (DMC), and the City of Santa Cruz Economic Development Office to identify priorities and improvements for Downtown over the next 5 years. The survey ran from October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and collected a total of **3,178 responses**. The survey was also translated into Spanish.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Downtown Santa Cruz Today

The first series of questions asked respondents about their perception of Downtown Santa Cruz today, particularly as it relates to the fundamentals of cleanliness and safety.

- The majority (56%) of respondents said safety in Downtown has gotten “much worse” or “slightly worse” over the past three years. Just 16% of respondents said safety was “slightly better” or “much better”.
- Based on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being “very unsafe” and 5 being “very safe”, the **average rating of safety in Downtown Santa Cruz today is a 2.7**.
- When asked why respondents gave the rating they did, many mentioned unpredictable, and sometimes aggressive, behaviors from individuals under the influence of drugs or individuals with mental health issues. Respondents also differentiated between feeling safer during the day and less safe during the evening and early morning hours.
- In terms of cleanliness, close to the majority (46%) of respondents said it had gotten “much worse” or “slightly worse” over the past three years. 24% of respondents said cleanliness was either “much better” or “slightly better”.
- Based on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being “very dirty” and 5 being “very clean”, the **average rating of cleanliness in Downtown Santa Cruz today is a 2.6**.
- When asked why respondents gave the rating they did, responses frequently involved the mention of Downtown’s population experiencing homelessness and issues of cleanliness relating to trash and the sight and smell of urine and feces. Additionally, a number of respondents cited dirt and grime on Downtown sidewalks.

### Downtown Santa Cruz in the Future

The second series of questions asked respondents what would improve Downtown Santa Cruz in the future.

- The majority of respondents said the following enhanced services were “Very Important” for Downtown Santa Cruz:
  - Enhanced Safety and Hospitality (e.g. safety escorts, address disruptive street behaviors, friendly engagement with Downtown visitors) – 66%

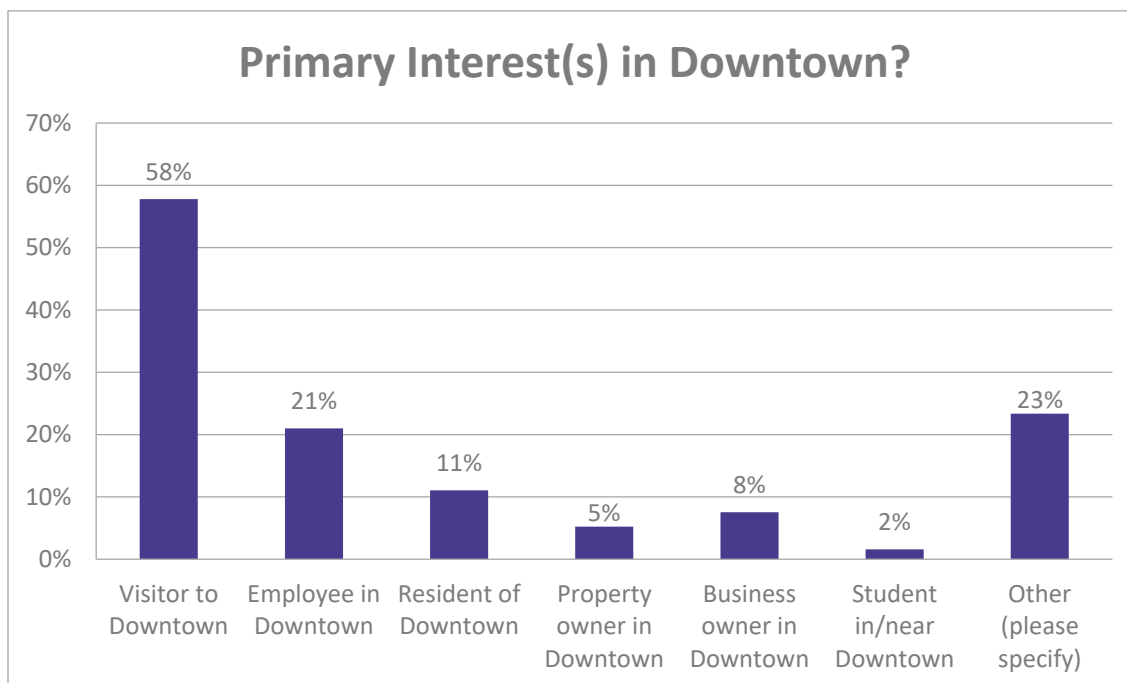
- Outreach Services (e.g. additional support for populations experiencing homelessness and those with mental health issues) – 65%
- Enhanced Maintenance (e.g. scrub sidewalks, pick up trash, maintain landscape) – 60%
- Economic Vitality (e.g. support local businesses; incubate new businesses; expand vitality to side streets) – 57%
- Public Place Activation (e.g. enliven spaces like parks, plazas, the riverfront) – 51%
- When asked to select the one MOST important enhanced service, the top response was Enhanced Safety and Hospitality. Three of the five top responses relate to enhancing clean and safe services in Downtown.
  - **Enhanced Safety and Hospitality - 39%**
  - Outreach Services - 16%
  - Economic Vitality - 12%
  - Enhanced Maintenance - 10%
  - Public Place Activation - 6%

## SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The information below provides an overview of who took the survey. The robust number of responses allows for cross tabulation by a number of factors to see if or how responses differ based on respondent characteristics. Cross tabulations can be found at the end of this document.

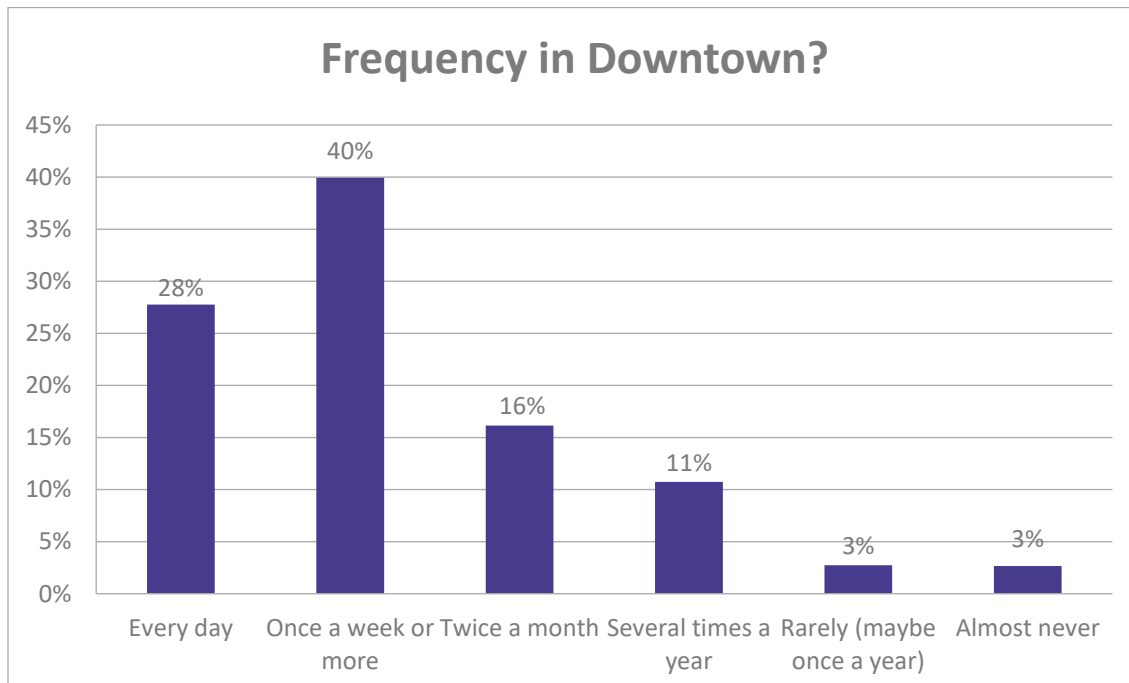
Which of the following BEST characterizes your primary interest(s) in Downtown Santa Cruz? (Choose all that apply)

Over half of survey respondents identified being a visitor to Downtown. The other half represent a variety of other interests in Downtown, including employees, residents, property and business owners. The survey did not capture a large response from students. “Other” interests include residents who live near Downtown.



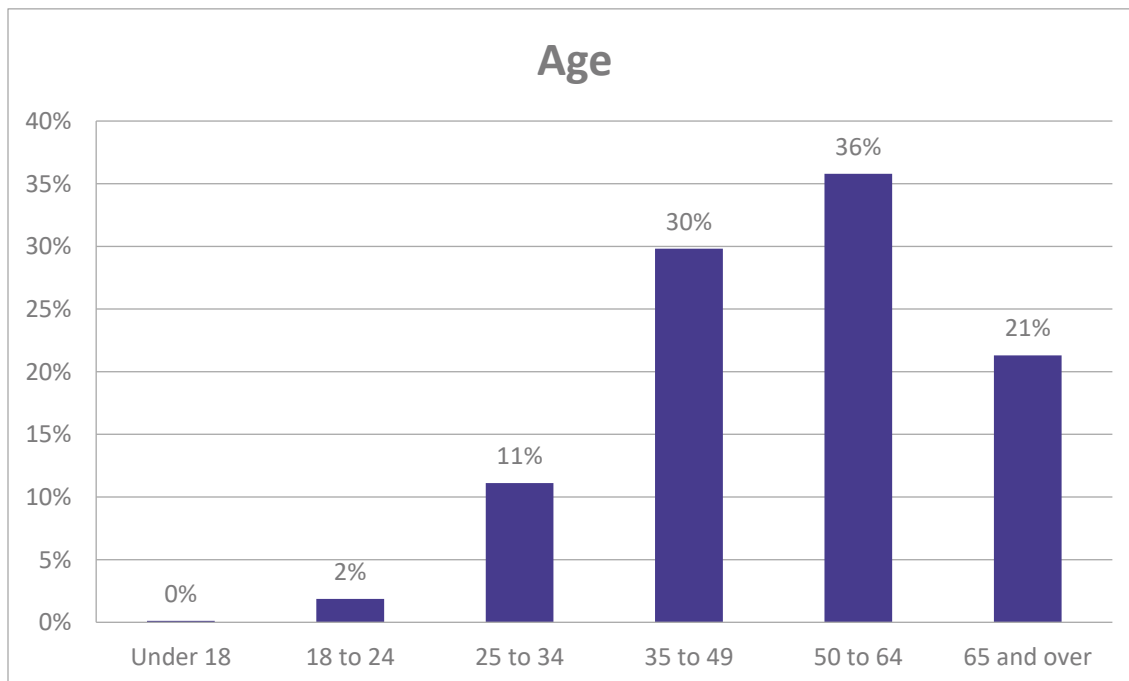
## Approximately how often are you in Downtown Santa Cruz?

The survey reached people who are frequently in Downtown. Nearly 70% of respondents said they are in Downtown “every day” or “once a week or more.”

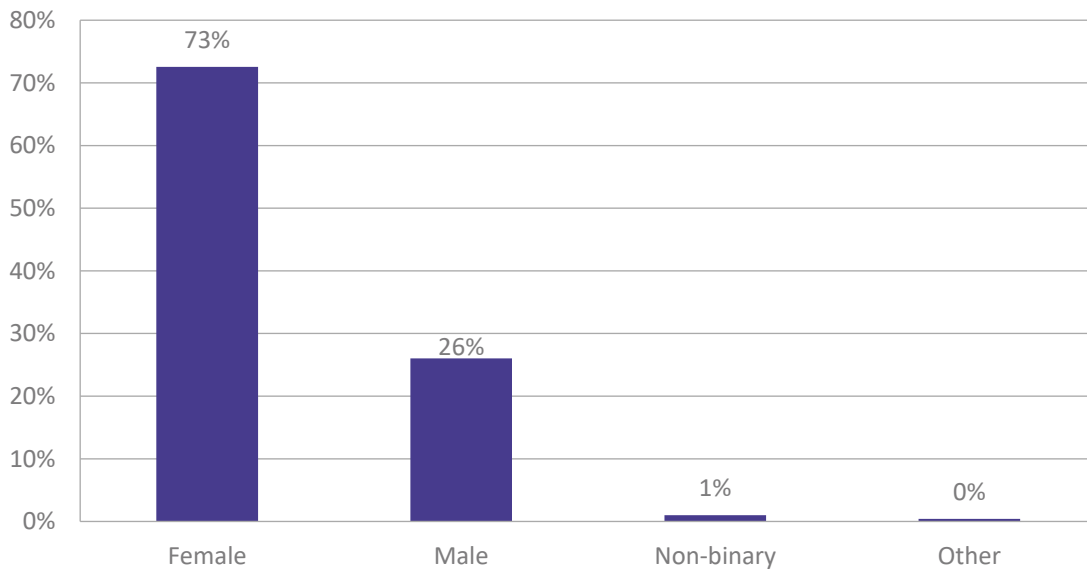


## Demographics (Optional)

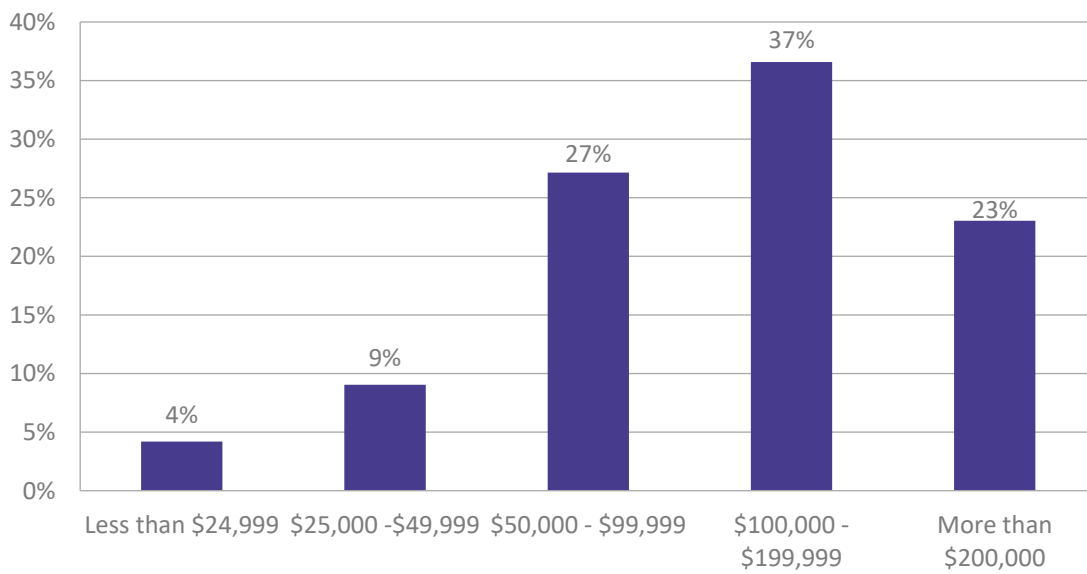
Compared to Census data for the City of Santa Cruz, survey respondents skewed toward older, higher income households. The majority of survey respondents were females and white.



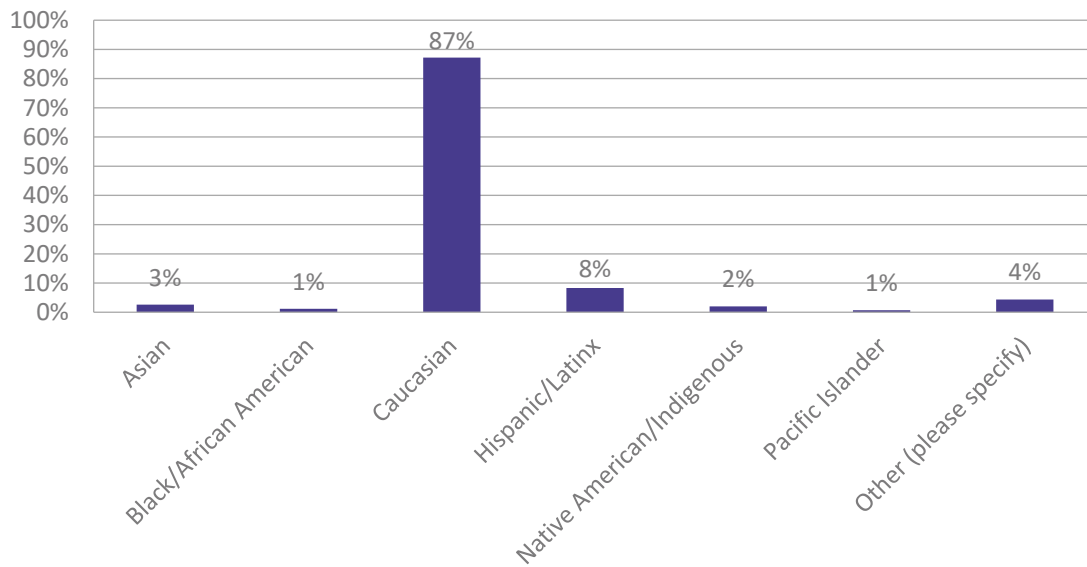
## Gender



## Annual Household Income



## I identify my ethnicity as: (Choose all that apply)



## What is your home zip code?

Approximately half of all respondents who provided their zip code were from the Santa Cruz zip code 95060. The next most common zip codes were 95062 (21%), 95003 (6%), 95065 (4%) and 95066 (3%), as depicted in the map below.

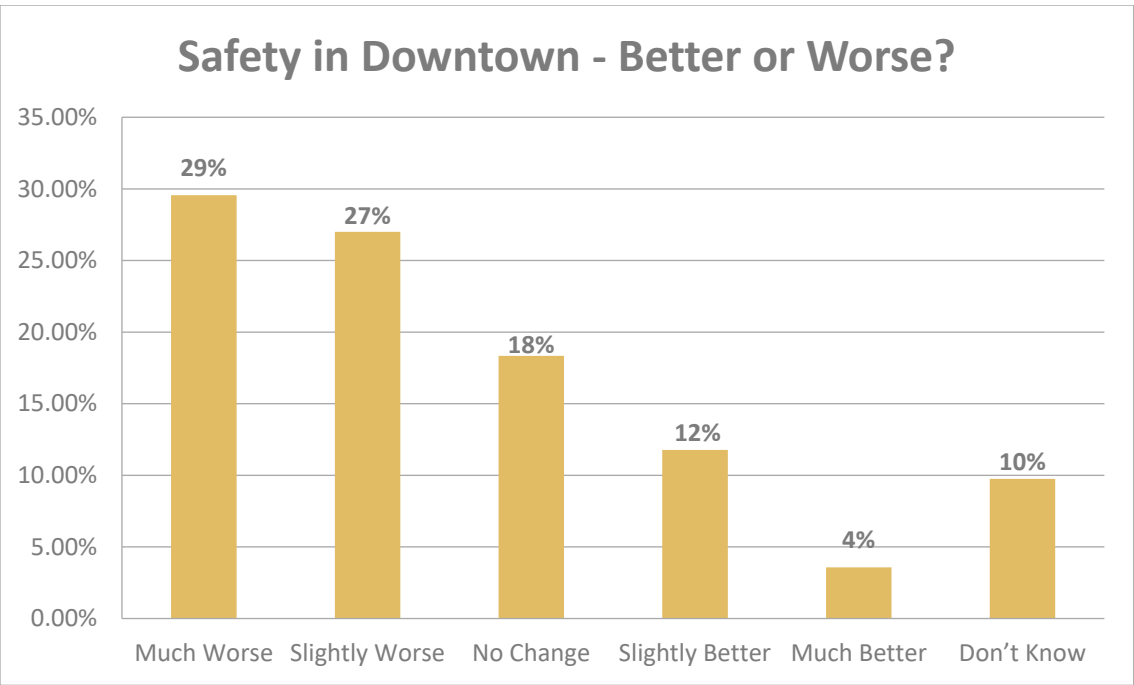


# DOWNTOWN SANTA CRUZ TODAY

## Safety in Downtown

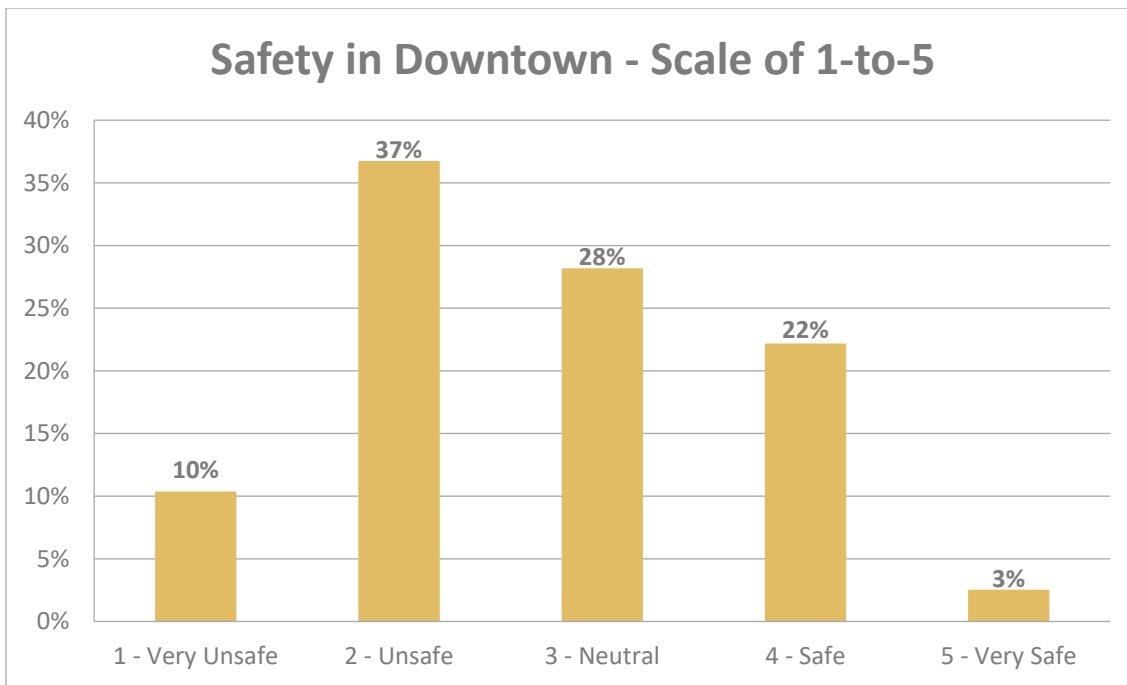
Has safety in Downtown Santa Cruz improved or worsened over the past three years? (Choose one)

Responses to this question weighed more heavily toward safety getting worse over the past three years. Approximately 56% of respondents said safety has gotten “much worse” or “slightly worse”; 16% said it has gotten “slightly better” or “much better”.



On a scale of 1-to-5, how would you rate safety in Downtown today? (Choose one)

Based on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being “very unsafe” and 5 being “very safe”, the **average rating of safety in Downtown Santa Cruz today is a 2.7**, indicating that, on average, survey respondents perceive Downtown as “unsafe”.



Respondents were asked *why* they selected the response they did. Common themes were:

#### **“Very Unsafe” and “Unsafe”**

- Unpredictable, and sometimes aggressive, behaviors from people with mental health issues
- Visible drug use and sales
- Theft
- Increasing number of people experiencing homelessness
- Many respondents noted a difference in their feeling of safety depending on the time of day and whether or not they were alone. Respondents were less comfortable at the night and during early morning hours.

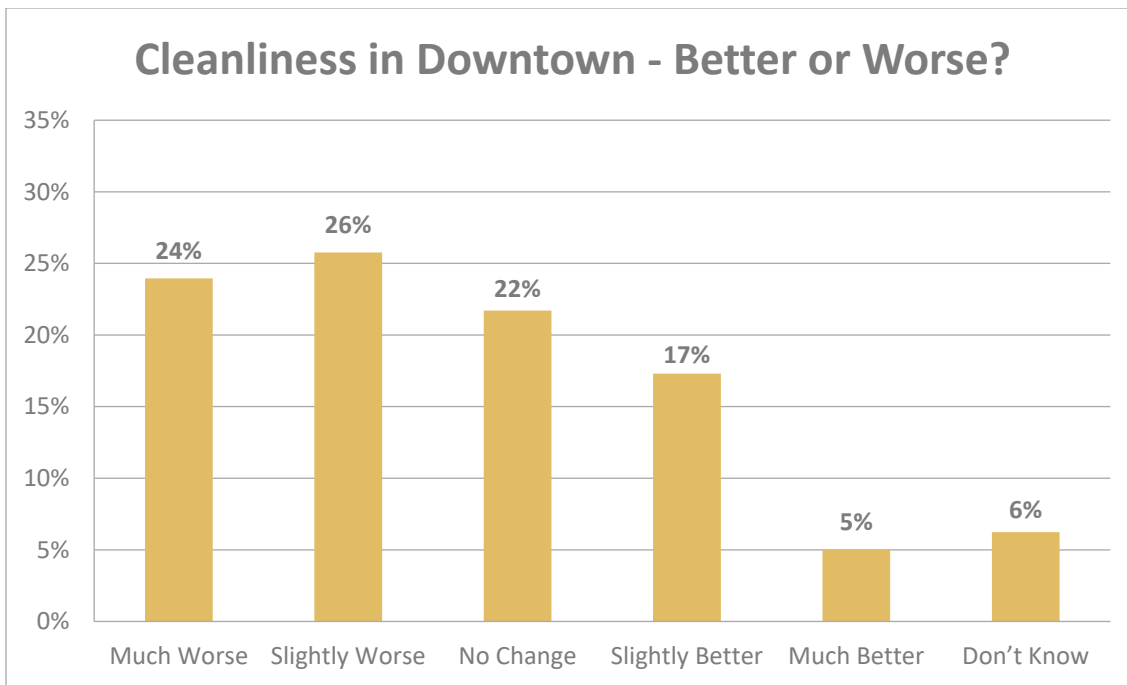
#### **“Very Safe” and “Safe”**

- Feel completely safe in Downtown
- Feel safe personally but have heard of incidents happening to other people, which makes them more vigilant

## **Cleanliness in Downtown**

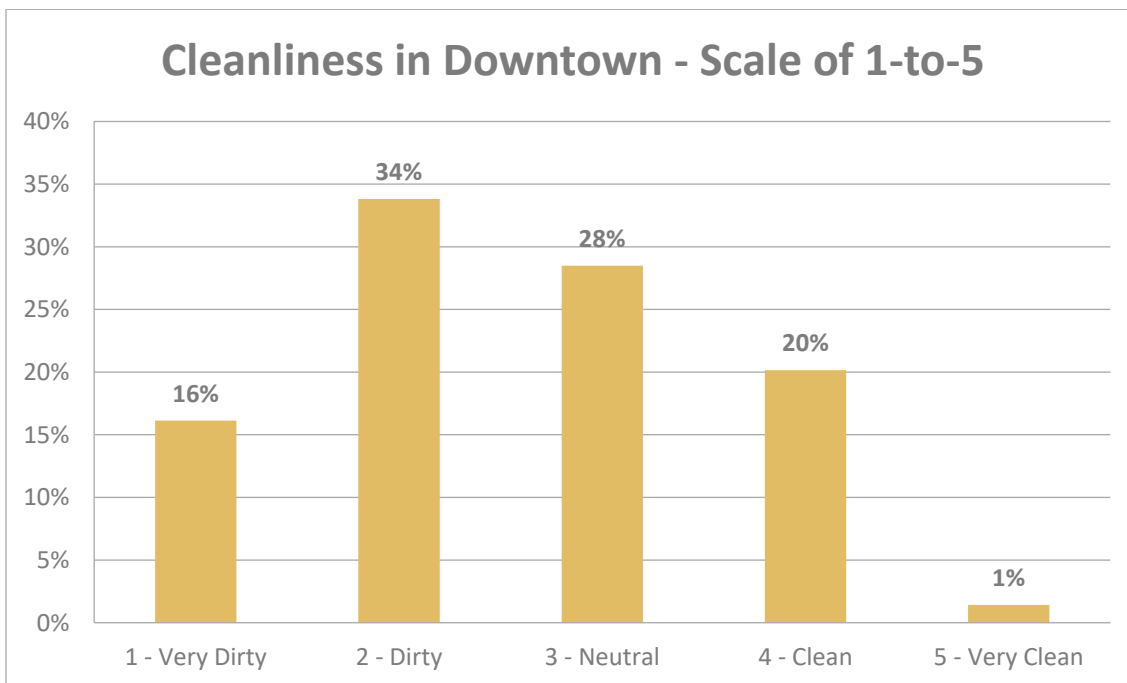
Has cleanliness in Downtown Santa Cruz improved or worsened over the past three years? (Choose one)

Responses to this question weighed more heavily toward cleanliness getting worse over the past three years. Approximately 50% of respondents said cleanliness was “much worse” or “slightly worse”; 22% said it has gotten “slightly better” or “much better”.



On a scale of 1-to-5, how would you rate cleanliness in Downtown today? (Choose one)

Based on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being “very dirty” and 5 being “very clean”, the **average rating of cleanliness in Downtown Santa Cruz today is a 2.6**, indicating a perception among survey respondents that Downtown is “dirty”.



Repsondents were asked *why* they selected the response they did. Common themes were:

#### “Very Dirty” and “Dirty”

- Trash on streets and sidewalks
- Dirt/grime on sidewalks

- ## Very Clean" and "Clean"

- There is not as much trash as there used to be
- People are out cleaning Pacific Ave in the morning
- Cleanliness varies based on time of day and location in Downtown

Please offer three words that best capture your vision for Downtown by the year 2024.

The word cloud below represents the words respondents used to describe their vision for Downtown Santa Cruz in the future. The size of the word indicates how frequently it was used, with the largest words being those used most frequently.



The top ten words most frequently used to describe survey respondents' vision for Downtown Santa Cruz, include:

1. Safe
2. Clean
3. Fewer people experiencing homelessness
4. Friendly
5. Vibrant
6. Family oriented
7. Community feel
8. More, easier, free parking
9. Fun
10. Welcoming

## How important are the following enhanced services for Downtown Santa Cruz?

Respondents were provided a list of enhanced services, above and beyond what the City of Santa Cruz provides, and asked to identify the importance of the service as either: “Very Important”, “Important”, “Somewhat Important”, “Not Important” or “Don’t Know”. The chart below is sorted by actions considered “Very Important”. There were five actions that were considered “Very Important” by the majority of respondents, including enhanced safety and hospitality (66%), outreach services (65%), enhanced maintenance (60%); economic vitality (57%), and public place activation (51%).

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don’t Know
<b>Enhanced Safety and Hospitality</b> (e.g. safety escorts, address disruptive street behaviors, friendly engagement with Downtown visitors)	<b>66%</b>	21%	9%	4%	1%
<b>Outreach Services</b> (e.g. additional support for populations experiencing homelessness and those with mental health issues)	<b>65%</b>	20%	8%	5%	2%
<b>Enhanced Maintenance</b> (e.g. scrub sidewalks, pick up trash, maintain landscape)	<b>60%</b>	30%	9%	1%	0%
<b>Economic Vitality</b> (e.g. support local businesses; incubate new businesses; expand vitality to side streets)	<b>57%</b>	30%	10%	2%	1%
<b>Public Place Activation</b> (e.g. enliven spaces like parks, plazas, the riverfront)	<b>51%</b>	31%	13%	3%	1%
<b>Long Term Planning</b> (e.g. big picture ideas and vision for Downtown)	42%	34%	17%	4%	1%
<b>Mobility Enhancements</b> (e.g. bike parking; employee transit incentives; other strategies to encourage alternatives to driving)	34%	29%	24%	11%	2%
<b>Special Events</b> (e.g. events that appeal to Downtown residents; family-friendly events to bring people Downtown)	34%	38%	21%	5%	1%
<b>Advocacy and Education</b> for issues impacting Downtown (e.g. need for housing at a variety of price points)	33%	30%	23%	10%	4%
<b>Capital Improvements</b> (e.g. play areas for children; public art; street furniture)	28%	34%	27%	9%	1%
<b>Parking Management</b> (e.g. signage and pricing to efficiently use parking resources, improve circulation through Downtown)	27%	31%	27%	12%	2%
<b>Marketing and Image</b> (e.g. pro-actively share positive information; improve perceptions of Downtown)	22%	30%	27%	18%	3%
<b>Cosmetic Improvements</b> (e.g. murals; decorative lighting; plantings)	22%	36%	31%	10%	1%
<b>District Identity</b> (e.g. gateways; banners; signage; connection to the beach)	11%	22%	33%	30%	4%

Respondents could also select “Other” to provide another suggestion. Commonly cited “**Other**” enhanced services included:

- Support for local businesses to help keep rents affordable
- Make Pacific Ave pedestrian only

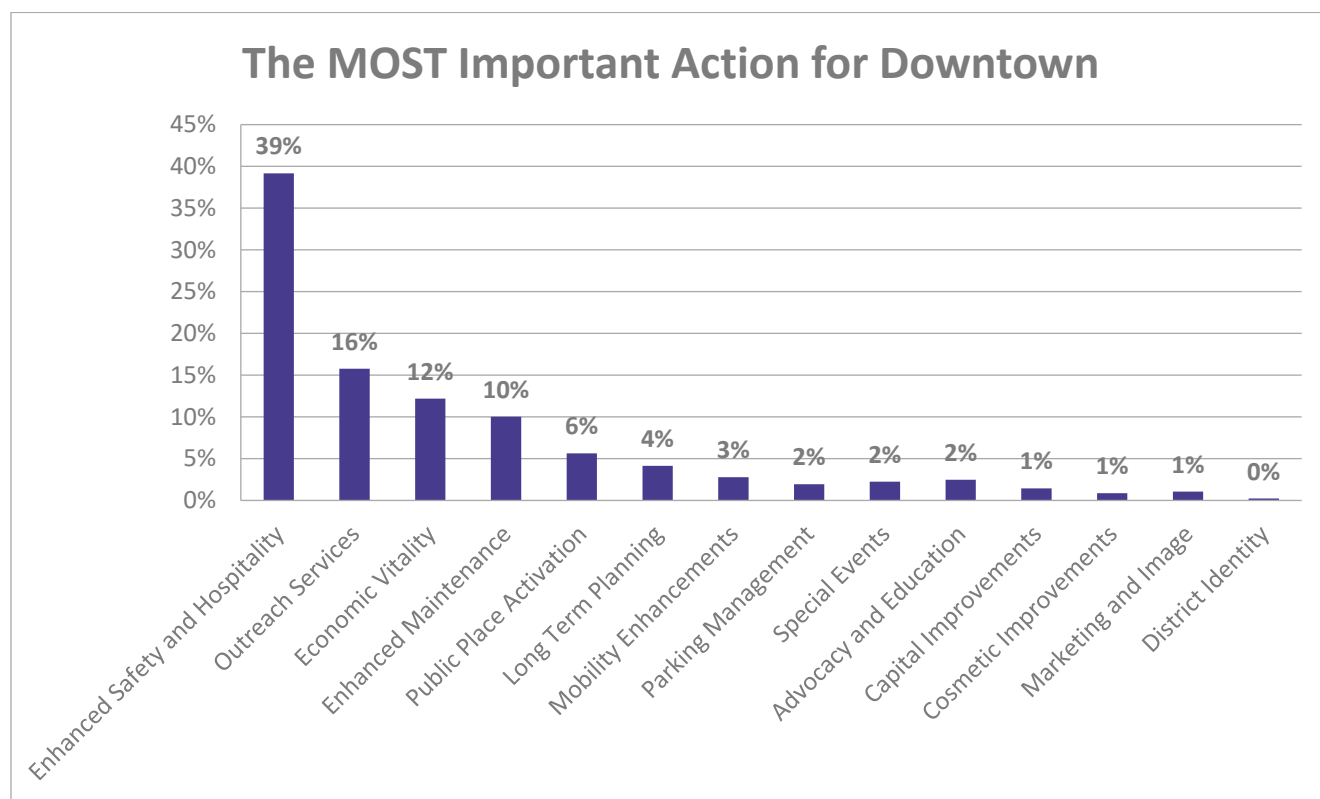
- Add more, clean, public restrooms

From the enhanced services in the question above, which ONE service is the most important for Downtown?

To assist in priority setting, respondents were asked to select just ONE action from the preceding question's answer choices. The enhanced services respondents selected as most important were:

- **Enhanced Safety and Hospitality (39%)**
- Outreach Services (16%)
- Economic Vitality (12%)
- Enhanced Maintenance (10%)
- Public Place Activation (6%)

By far the greatest number of people (39%) selected enhanced safety and hospitality, indicating that as a strong priority.



If you could suggest one specific improvement to enhance Downtown Santa Cruz, not listed above, what would it be?

The word cloud below represents the words respondents suggested to enhance Downtown Santa Cruz when asked an open-ended question. The size of the word indicates how frequently it was used, with the largest words being those used most often.



<b>Employee</b>	2.7	2.6
<b>Resident</b>	2.8	2.6
<b>Student</b>	2.9	2.8
<b>Visitor</b>	2.7	2.6

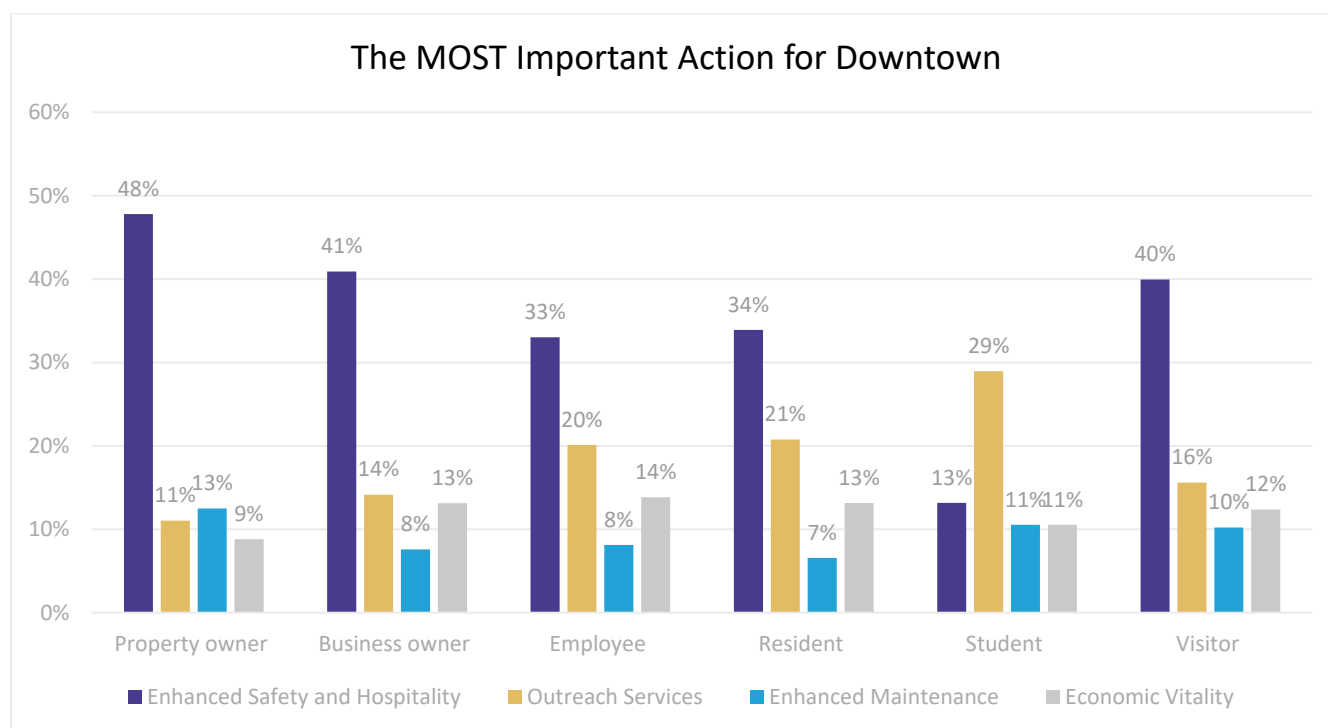
## Downtown Santa Cruz in the Future

The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who selected an action as “Very Important”, according to respondents’ interest in Downtown. Property owners, business owners, and visitors were the most likely to say Enhanced Safety and Hospitality is Very Important. Employees, residents and students were more likely to say Outreach services were Very Important. Property owners were the most likely group to say Enhanced Maintenance was Very Important and Business Owners were the group most keen on Economic Vitality.

Actions	“Very Important”					
	Property Owner	Business Owner	Employee	Resident	Student	Visitor
<b>Enhanced Safety and Hospitality</b> (e.g. safety escorts, address disruptive street behaviors, friendly engagement with Downtown visitors)	75%	74%	62%	58%	56%	66%
<b>Outreach Services</b> (e.g. additional support for populations experiencing homelessness and those with mental health issues)	66%	67%	67%	64%	90%	65%
<b>Enhanced Maintenance</b> (e.g. scrub sidewalks, pick up trash, maintain landscape)	69%	62%	55%	52%	56%	59%
<b>Economic Vitality</b> (e.g. support local businesses; incubate new businesses; expand vitality to side streets)	58%	70%	57%	53%	41%	58%
<b>Public Place Activation</b> (e.g. enliven spaces like parks, plazas, the riverfront)	48%	50%	50%	50%	53%	51%
<b>Long Term Planning</b> (e.g. big picture ideas and vision for Downtown)	41%	50%	44%	40%	38%	40%
<b>Mobility Enhancements</b> (e.g. bike parking; employee transit incentives; other strategies to encourage alternatives to driving)	31%	30%	40%	39%	62%	32%
<b>Special Events</b> (e.g. events that appeal to Downtown residents; family-friendly events to bring people Downtown)	33%	29%	31%	32%	36%	35%
<b>Advocacy and Education</b> for issues impacting Downtown (e.g. need for housing at a variety of price points)	29%	31%	41%	43%	62%	32%
<b>Capital Improvements</b> (e.g. play areas for children; public art; street furniture)	28%	28%	32%	27%	33%	28%
<b>Parking Management</b> (e.g. signage and pricing to efficiently use parking resources, improve circulation through Downtown)	31%	26%	29%	23%	28%	26%
<b>Marketing and Image</b> (e.g. pro-actively share positive information; improve perceptions of Downtown)	32%	35%	21%	19%	13%	20%

<b>Cosmetic Improvements</b> (e.g. murals; decorative lighting; plantings)	23%	21%	21%	18%	13%	21%
<b>District Identity</b> (e.g. gateways; banners; signage; connection to the beach)	15%	15%	12%	9%	8%	10%

Respondents, regardless of their interest in Downtown, had similar actions considered the MOST important. Each group had the same top four responses, although the exact order of priorities differed somewhat based on the group – as seen in the chart below. All groups, except students, selected Enhanced Safety and Hospitality as their MOST important action by a fairly significant margin. While four of the top five priorities were the same, the fifth priority had some variation. With employees and visitors, it was Public Place Activation (with 6% each), residents selected Advocacy and Education (6% and 11% respectively); business owners chose Marketing and Image (7%) and property owners selected Long Term Planning (4%).



## CROSS TABULATION BY AGE

The survey results were cross tabulated by age to see if responses differed based on the age of the respondent. The results were cross tabulated by ages 18-to-24, 25-to-34, 35-to-49, 50-to-64, and 65 and over. There were not enough respondents under the age of 18 to be included in the analysis.

### Downtown Santa Cruz Today

On average, younger and older respondents gave a slightly more favorable rating for safety and cleanliness in Downtown than those ages 35 to 64. However, all respondents were in the range of "Dirty" to "Neutral".

Age	Rating of Safety (1-to-5) 1=Very Unsafe; 5=Very Safe	Rating of Cleanliness (1-to-5) 1=Very Dirty; 5=Very Clean
18 to 24	2.9	2.9
25 to 34	2.8	2.8
35 to 49	2.6	2.5
50 to 64	2.6	2.5
65 and Over	3.0	2.8

## Downtown Santa Cruz in the Future

The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who selected an action as “Very Important”, according to respondents’ age. Younger respondents (under 35) and older respondents (over 65) were the most likely to say Outreach Services are Very Important. Respondents ages 35 to 64 were more likely to say Enhanced Safety and Hospitality were Very Important.

	“Very Important”				
Actions	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 64	65 +
<b>Enhanced Safety and Hospitality</b> (e.g. safety escorts, address disruptive street behaviors, friendly engagement with Downtown visitors)	49%	54%	66%	71%	64%
<b>Outreach Services</b> (e.g. additional support for populations experiencing homelessness and those with mental health issues)	77%	71%	64%	63%	68%
<b>Enhanced Maintenance</b> (e.g. scrub sidewalks, pick up trash, maintain landscape)	55%	42%	58%	65%	62%
<b>Economic Vitality</b> (e.g. support local businesses; incubate new businesses; expand vitality to side streets)	47%	54%	58%	60%	54%
<b>Public Place Activation</b> (e.g. enliven spaces like parks, plazas, the riverfront)	51%	46%	55%	52%	45%
<b>Long Term Planning</b> (e.g. big picture ideas and vision for Downtown)	47%	35%	41%	44%	46%
<b>Mobility Enhancements</b> (e.g. bike parking; employee transit incentives; other strategies to encourage alternatives to driving)	51%	40%	32%	35%	34%
<b>Special Events</b> (e.g. events that appeal to Downtown residents; family-friendly events to bring people Downtown)	43%	32%	37%	35%	30%
<b>Advocacy and Education</b> for issues impacting Downtown (e.g. need for housing at a variety of price points)	62%	45%	31%	31%	33%
<b>Capital Improvements</b> (e.g. play areas for children; public art; street furniture)	34%	31%	33%	26%	26%
<b>Parking Management</b> (e.g. signage and pricing to efficiently use parking resources, improve circulation through Downtown)	34%	23%	22%	28%	35%

<b>Marketing and Image</b> (e.g. pro-actively share positive information; improve perceptions of Downtown)	11%	14%	20%	24%	26%
<b>Cosmetic Improvements</b> (e.g. murals; decorative lighting; plantings)	20%	19%	20%	23%	22%
<b>District Identity</b> (e.g. gateways; banners; signage; connection to the beach)	19%	11%	8%	12%	12%

Respondents of all ages had the same top three MOST important actions for Downtown. With the exception of respondents under 24, all ages were most likely to select Enhanced Safety and Hospitality as their most important action. Outreach Services skewed in priority towards a younger demographic. Additional top priorities included Mobility and Advocacy (9%) for respondents 18 to 24; Public Place Activation (8%) for respondents 25 to 34; and Enhanced Maintenance (10%, 9%, and 14% respectively) for respondents 35 to 49, 50 to 64 and 65 and over.

