

TRAVERSE CITY MOVING DOWNTOWN FORWARD | ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

An online survey was prepared by Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) as part of the Moving Downtown Forward process for the Traverse City DDA. This survey was open to the public with the goal of gathering information from a broad audience about their experience and desires for Downtown Traverse City for the future. The survey ran from June 6th to July 5th, 2022. It collected **1,172 responses**.

Demographics: Survey respondents represented a cross-section of downtown Traverse City stakeholders. Respondents were typically 35-64 years old (61%), white (96%), female (66%), and representing a range of household incomes. 83% of respondents identified as local residents, with 58% living in Traverse City and 25% elsewhere in Grand Traverse County. More details on respondent characteristics can be found starting on page 8.

KEY FINDINGS

Downtown Traverse City Today

- The top three responses to how often respondents come downtown were once a week (38%), daily due to living or working Downtown (33%), and once or twice a month (18%).
- The top three amenities that bring respondents to downtown were restaurants and bars (73%), shopping/markets (55%), and recreational opportunities (36%).
- When it came to respondents' perceptions of whether certain downtown characteristics have gotten better or worse over the past five years, there was strong consensus.
 - General appearance (61%), mix of restaurants and nightlife (54%), and pedestrian & bicycle friendliness (47%) were the top three characteristics respondents rated as slightly or much better.
 - Public safety (51%), cleanliness (47%), arts and cultural activities (47%), parks and open space (46%), mix of retail and shopping options (43%), and businesses and jobs (43%) were the characteristics that respondents heavily rated as no change.
 - Housing options and affordability (86%), unhoused population (63%), and parking options (58%) were the top three characteristics respondents rated as slightly or much worse.

Downtown Traverse City in the Future

- The top five words that capture respondents' vision for downtown Traverse City in 2030 were: walkable (16%), [more/easier/free] parking (15%), affordable (12%), clean (10%), and safe (9%).
- The physical improvements respondents considered to be the most important (i.e. those given the most ratings of important or very important) to implement in order to achieve their vision for downtown Traverse City were: improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown (89%), implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements (79%), and make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (77%).
 - When asked to select the most important of those physical improvements listed, respondents' top choices were: improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown (22%), increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s) (15%), make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (12%), and increase downtown housing options (12%).
- The programs and services respondents considered to be the most important (i.e. those given the most ratings of important or very important) to implement in order to achieve their vision for downtown were:

help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown (85%), ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible (75%), attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies (69%), and create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing (68%).

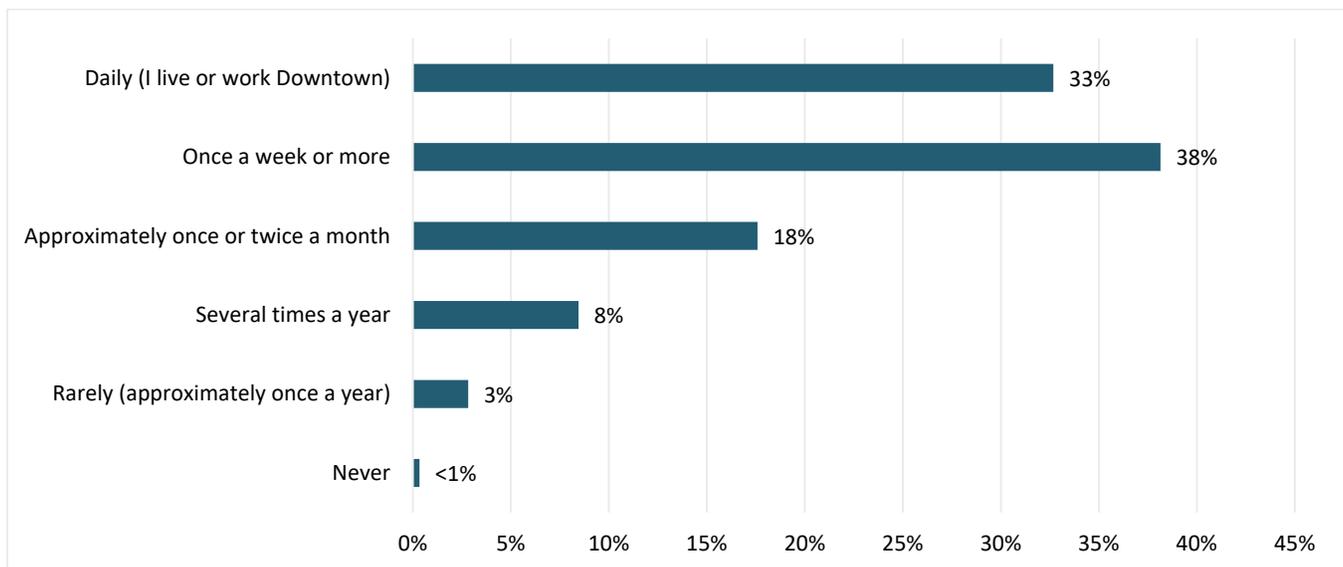
- When asked to select the most important of those programs and services listed, respondents' top choices were: create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown (29%), help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown (18%), and become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience (12%).

SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1: How often do you come downtown?

Responses: 1,172

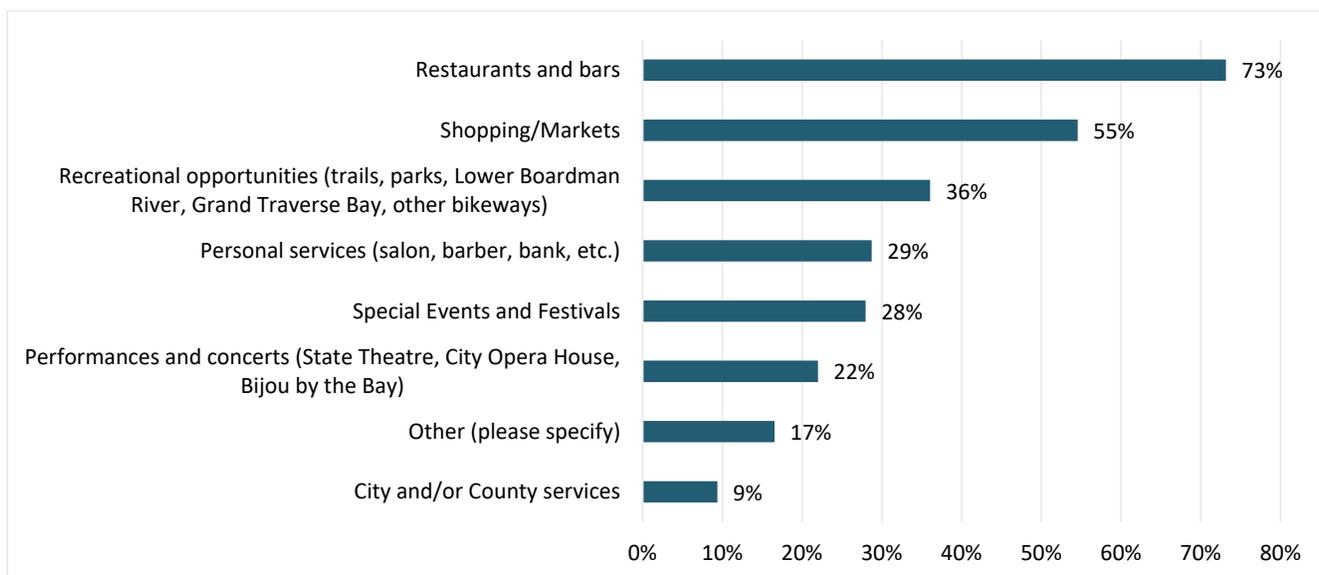
When asked to respond to how often they come downtown, most respondents answered that they come **once a week or more**, with **daily** or **once or twice per month** as the next most popular answers. These three responses captured about **88%** of respondents.



Question 2: What most often brings you downtown? (Please select up to three only)

Responses: 1,173

When asked select what brings them to downtown Traverse City most often, **restaurants and bars** was by far the top answer in respondents' top three with over **73%** of responses. **Shopping/markets** and **recreational opportunities** were also in the top three with **55%** and **36%** of responses, respectively.



When asked to specify the response of "other", common themes included:

- Working downtown, 120 respondents
- Residing downtown, 17 respondents
- Walking around downtown to look at the buildings and people, 18 respondents

Question 3: Do you think the following characteristics of downtown have become better or worse in the past five years?

Responses: 1,166

Respondents were asked to rate a series of options by perceived change over the past five years. The chart below is sorted according to the action's perceived change, with the most popular answer choice highlighted for each. Most actions were rated by the majority of respondents as no change. Much Better never received the majority of responses. Options that were perceived to get slightly better included **general appearance, including landscaping and beautification, mix of restaurants and nightlife, and pedestrian & bicycle friendliness**. Options that were perceived to get worse included **parking options, unhoused population, and housing options and affordability**.

	Much Better	Slightly Better	No Change	Slightly Worse	Much Worse
General appearance, including landscaping and beautification	17%	44%	23%	11%	5%
Mix of restaurants and nightlife	12%	42%	29%	13%	4%
Pedestrian & bicycle friendliness	8%	39%	33%	14%	6%
Arts and cultural activities	8%	32%	47%	11%	2%
Mix of retail and shopping options	7%	31%	43%	15%	4%
Parks and open space	8%	29%	46%	12%	5%
Businesses and jobs	5%	28%	43%	19%	5%
Cleanliness (e.g., sidewalks, litter removal, snow removal)	7%	24%	47%	16%	6%
Public Safety	5%	20%	51%	17%	6%
Parking options	2%	12%	28%	26%	32%

'very important' were: **improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality (65%), make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (48%), and implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality (46%).**

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality	65%	24%	9%	3%
Implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality	46%	33%	14%	7%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (widen sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks, more comprehensive snowmelt system, etc.)	48%	29%	14%	10%
Enhance the ambiance of downtown (beautification, festival lights, flowers, tree canopy, public art, etc.)	34%	34%	23%	9%
Improve connectivity between downtown and Grand Traverse Bay	32%	33%	24%	12%
Improve the appearance of alleys and consider programming the alleys with things like outdoor dining, events, etc.	29%	35%	19%	17%
Make State Street and side streets more pedestrian-friendly, inviting, and active	32%	30%	21%	17%
Increase downtown housing options	35%	21%	21%	22%
Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)	29%	26%	25%	20%
Attract more art and cultural venues and experiences, such as museums, concerts, and theaters	23%	28%	30%	19%
Improve connections between the Eighth Street Corridor and downtown	18%	31%	32%	19%
Ensure the proposed Civic Square project moves forward	18%	30%	28%	23%
Consider closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week	27%	16%	16%	42%
Other	28%			

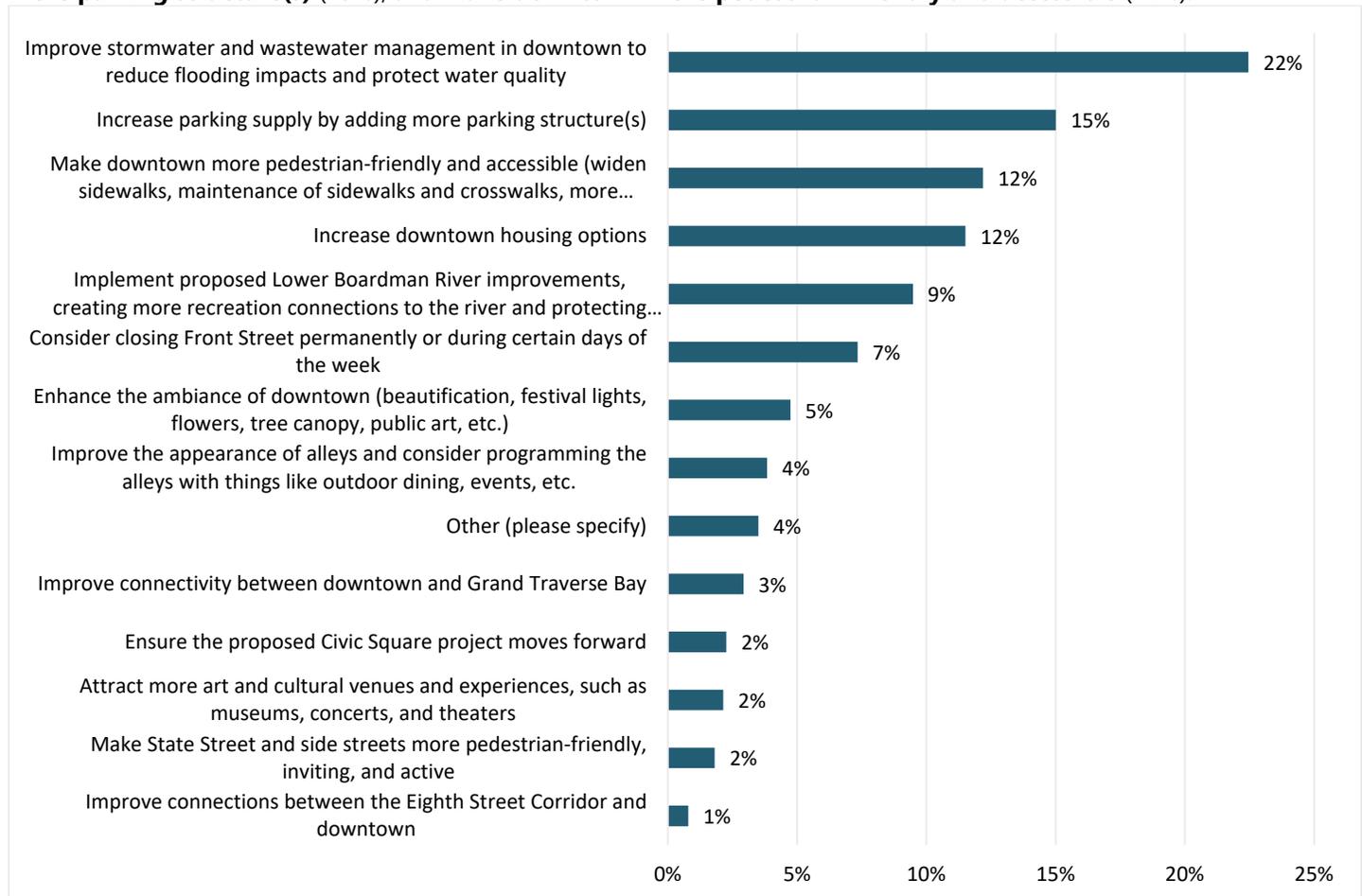
Responses in the 'Other' category not covered by answer options provided include:

- In addition to increasing housing options downtown, options should be affordable and/or support the local workforce
- Support multimodal transportation such as bicycling, public transit, and ride share
- Maintain the character and charm of downtown
- Increase the availability of free and affordable parking, especially for short errands (30-60 minutes), downtown workforce, and those who require accessible parking and are unable to use other forms of transportation
- Adding heated sidewalks to melt snow and ice

Question 6: Of the physical improvements listed in question 5, which ONE action will be MOST important?

Responses: 618

Respondents were asked to select ONE physical improvement from the previous question's answer choices. The top responses from survey respondents were: **improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality** (22%), **increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)** (15%), and **make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible** (12%).



Most responses in the 'Other' category were reflected in the question 5 summary. **Responses in the 'Other' category not covered previously include:**

- Prioritizing improving existing infrastructure rather than more development
- Adding public restrooms

Question 7: To achieve your vision for downtown Traverse City, how important is it to implement the following programs and services?

Responses: 956

Respondents were asked to rate a series of programs and services in downtown Traverse City as either 'very important,' 'important,' 'somewhat important,' or 'not important.' The chart below is sorted according to the action's importance, with the most popular answer choice highlighted for each. The top three actions considered 'very important' were: **help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown** (53%), **create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown** (47%), and **become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience** (37%).

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown	53%	32%	11%	3%
Ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible	35%	40%	19%	7%
Attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies	30%	39%	19%	12%
Create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown	47%	21%	17%	15%
Improve the management of parking services	27%	36%	25%	12%
Provide additional maintenance services (trash, snow removal, flower care, etc.)	21%	38%	33%	7%
Become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience	37%	22%	18%	23%
Make downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrate cultural diversity	32%	24%	21%	23%
Add more year-round activations and entertainment options	22%	32%	28%	17%
Improve marketing of downtown to local residents in Traverse City	15%	24%	29%	31%
Other (please specify)	15%			

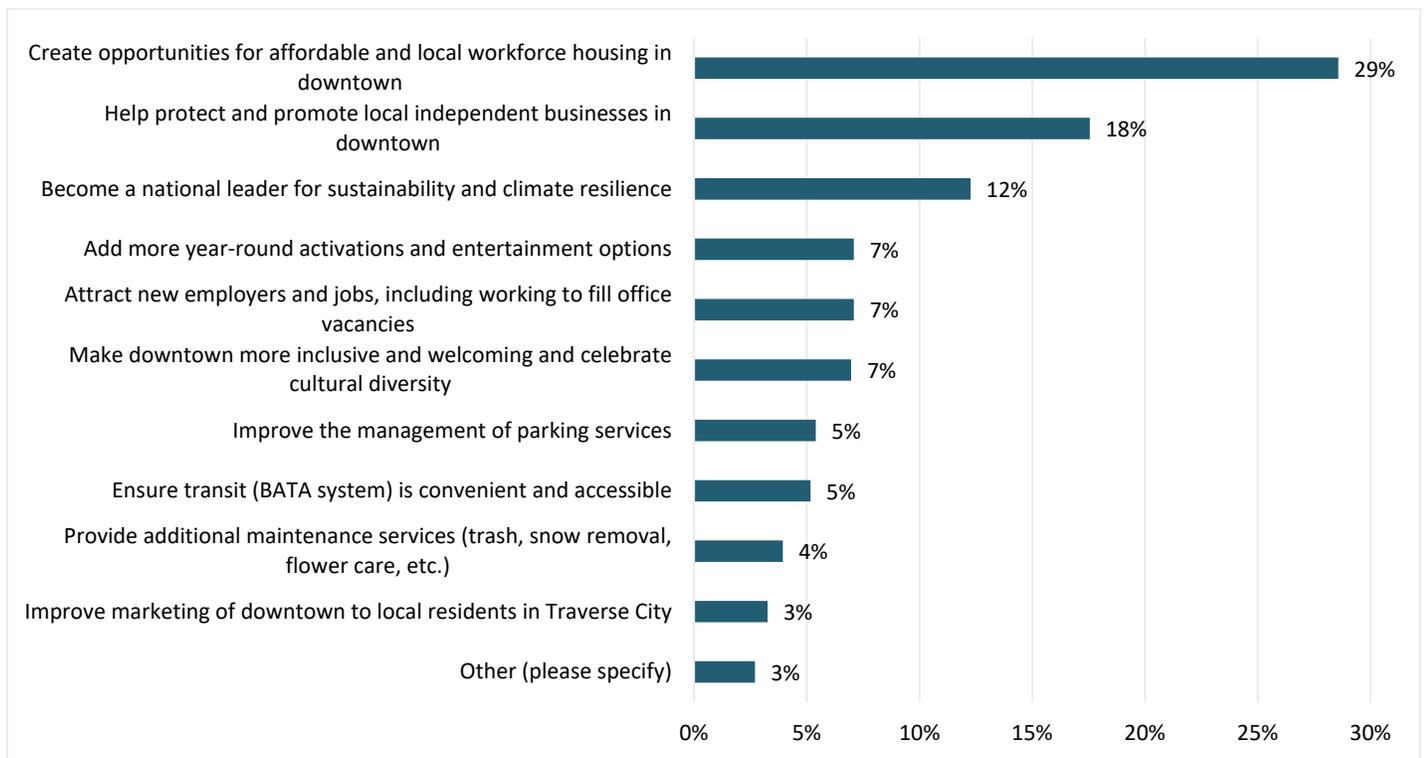
Responses in the 'Other' category not covered by answer options provided include:

- Focus more on providing options for housing, retail, and services for residents rather than tourists
- Improve public safety and cleanliness
- Limit growth downtown
- Improve infrastructure such as roads, wastewater system, power lines, etc.
- Have fewer festivals downtown, or regulate the size more effectively

Question 8: Of the programs and services listed in question 7, which ONE action will be MOST important?

Responses: 889

Respondents were asked to select ONE program and service from the previous question's answer choices. The top responses from survey respondents were: **create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown** (29%), **help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown** (18%), and **become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience** (12%).



Only 24 respondents selected 'Other,' with no consensus between each answer.

Question 9: If you could suggest one additional improvement to enhance downtown Traverse City, not listed above, what would it be?

Responses: 501

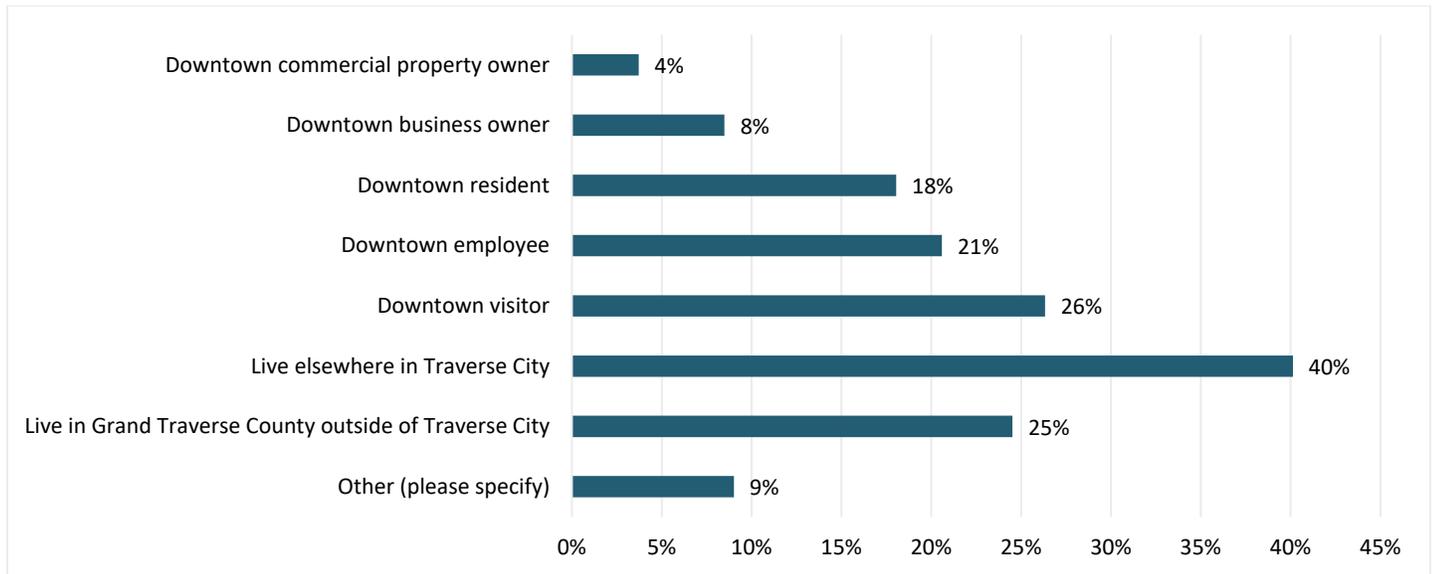
Respondents were asked to provide ideas for additional improvements to downtown Traverse City in an open-ended format. Many respondents elaborated on answer options provided in the prior questions. Specific ideas not included in previous questions include:

- Closing Front Street either permanently as a pedestrian mall or on the weekends/seasonally for outdoor dining
 - Others disagreed and noted that Front Street (and State Street) should be kept open to cars and remain as a one-way.
- Encourage uses that are inclusive of people of all ages – young children, teenagers, adults who do not drink, and seniors. Similar to this, many respondents expressed that there was less of a culture around drinking/partying downtown.
- Preserve the bay as a park and place where people can gather and enjoy the scenery. This may include diverting the majority of traffic away from the waterfront and increasing pedestrian connections.
- Some respondents expressed that they wished the Lower Boardman River had enhancements similar to San Antonio's River Walk. Others preferred that development is prevented along the river to keep it natural and scenic.
- 17 respondents (3.4%) mentioned ill feelings towards the DDA including charging too much for parking, supporting the needs of tourists and second home owners rather than full-time residents, creating a "dual government" structure, and a call to defund, eliminate, or abolish the DDA.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Which of the following best characterizes your primary interest(s) in downtown Traverse City? (Please select all that apply)

Responses: 942

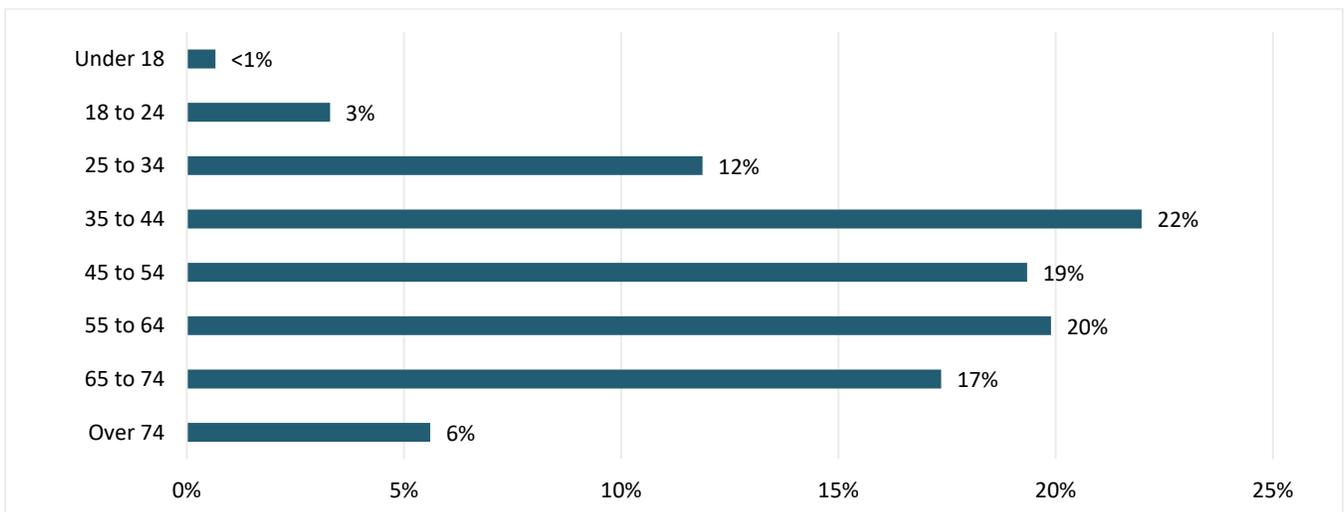


When asked to specify the response of "other", common themes (that were different than the presented options) included:

- Those who live outside of Grand Traverse County, but nearby in Northern Michigan
- Other frequent visitors to Traverse City, including downtown
- Former residents or employees of a downtown business
- Those considering moving to Traverse City or who live there part time

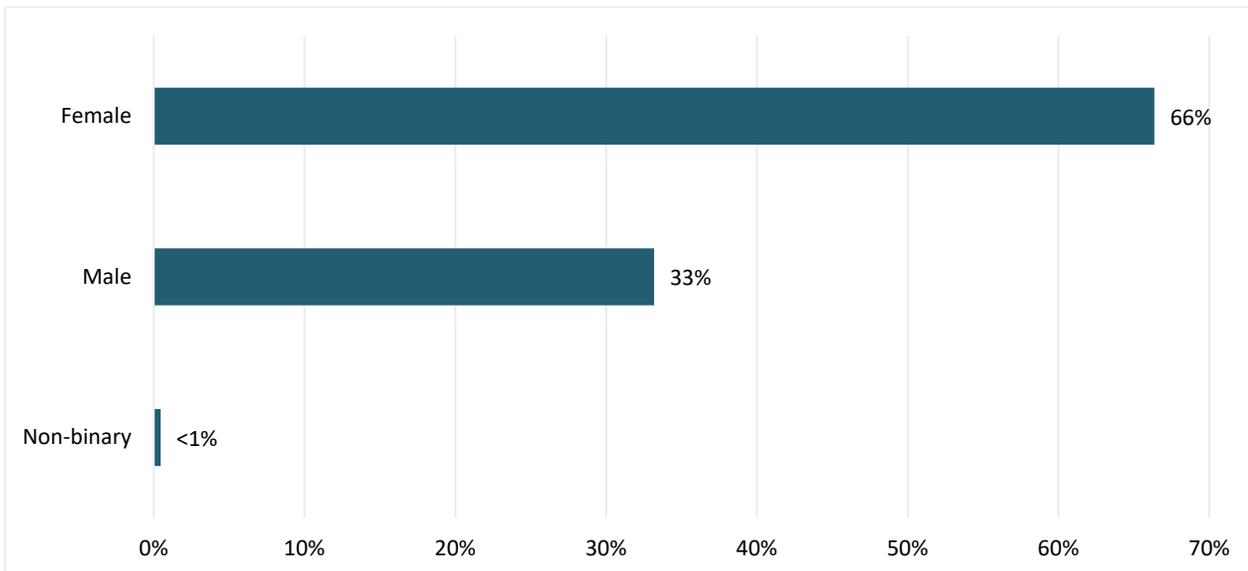
Age

Responses: 910



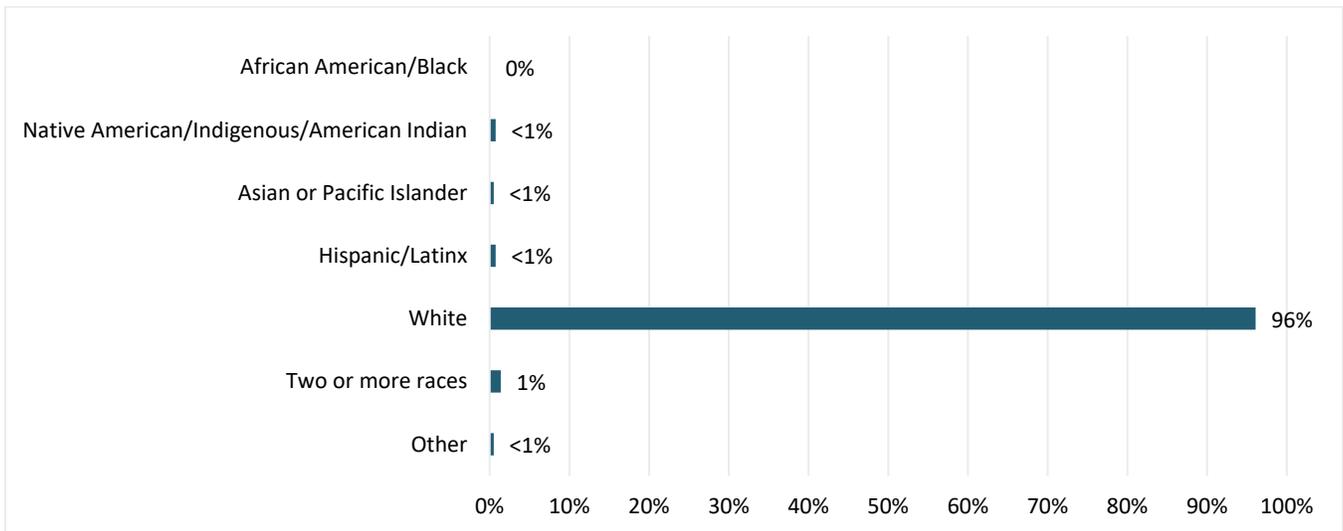
Gender

Responses: 874



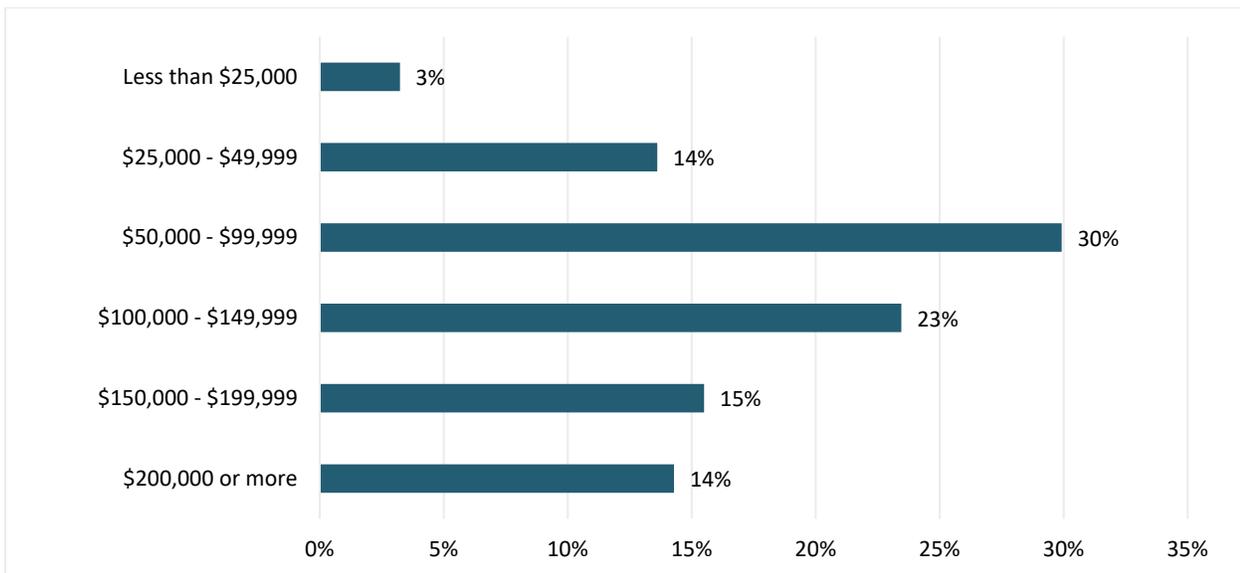
Race/Ethnicity

Responses: 793



Annual Household Income

Responses: 742



Zip Code

Responses: 901

Survey respondents provided 64 different home zip codes. The zip codes with the most representation in the survey data include (in order of frequency):

1. **49684** (351, 39%)
2. **49686** (257, 29%)
3. **49685** (118, 13%)

Together, these make up **81%** of responses.



CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR Q6

The survey results were cross-tabulated by interest in downtown Traverse City, age, income, and gender, to see if responses differed based on respondent characteristics and demographics. There was not enough variation in the ethnicity/race of respondents to adequately compare results, so this category is not included below.

Similarities and contrasts between different respondents were analyzed for the results to Q6 (i.e., "Of physical improvements listed in question 5, which one action will be MOST important?"). Results to Q6, analyzed by various characteristics, are provided below. In the following tables, the top responses for each category are highlighted in blue, helping to show similarities and differences in priority actions. The top choice for each characteristic is shown in darker blue, while any other services or actions receiving 10% or more are highlighted in lighter blue.

Primary Interest in Downtown Traverse City

The following categories of primary interest in downtown Traverse City were analyzed: downtown business owner, downtown resident, downtown employee, downtown visitor, resident of elsewhere in Traverse City, and resident of Grand Traverse County outside of Traverse City. Other interest groups were not included because response rates were too low. The table below shows some variation in physical improvements, based on what the respondent's interest is in downtown Traverse City. Some key similarities and differences include:

- Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality was the top priority amongst all interest groups, except for downtown business owners.

- Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s) was the top priority for downtown business owners and received more than 10% of votes for all interest groups.
- Increase downtown housing options was also a popular option for all interest groups, particularly downtown employees.
- Residents also placed greater priority on implementing the proposed Lower Boardman River improvements than the other interest groups.

	Downtown business owner	Downtown resident	Downtown employee	Downtown visitor	Live elsewhere in Traverse City	Live in Grand Traverse County outside of Traverse City
Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality	15%	16%	21%	18%	26%	23%
Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)	34%	12%	18%	14%	12%	15%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (widen sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks, more comprehensive snowmelt system, etc.)	3%	12%	8%	13%	11%	15%
Increase downtown housing options	11%	13%	18%	11%	11%	10%
Implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality	8%	15%	7%	10%	8%	10%
Consider closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week	9%	10%	9%	8%	7%	7%

Age

Results were cross-tabulated by age, for all age groups 25 to 74. The under 18, 18 to 24, and over 74 age groups did not have enough participation to be included. Key observations and variations across age groups include:

- Improving stormwater and wastewater management in downtown was the top choice for all age groups except 25-34, and gained popularity with increasing age.
- Making downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible was also more popular among older age groups.
- Increase downtown housing options was the top selection for the 25-34 age group and the second most popular choice for the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age groups.

- The 25 to 34, 35 to 44, and 45 to 54 age groups also prioritized implementing the proposed Lower Boardman River improvements and considering closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week more than older age groups.
- Increasing the parking supply by adding more parking structure(s) was a more popular choice for those over 55. The proportion of those aged 55-64 that ranked parking as their top priority (23%) was nearly double the proportion of those 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 (12% for each group).

	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74
Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality	12%	19%	19%	28%	29%
Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)	10%	12%	12%	23%	16%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (widen sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks, more comprehensive snowmelt system, etc.)	10%	14%	8%	14%	17%
Increase downtown housing options	14%	15%	16%	9%	6%
Implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality	12%	12%	10%	7%	6%
Consider closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week	10%	9%	10%	4%	5%

Annual Household Income

The income categories provided in the survey were less than \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000-\$199,999 and more than \$200,000. The less than \$25,000 group did not have enough participation to be included in the cross-tabulations. Key observations and variations across income groups include:

- Improving stormwater and wastewater management in downtown was the top choice for the lower income groups (\$25,000-\$149,999).
- Increasing the parking supply was the top choice for the higher income groups (over \$150,000).
- Increasing downtown housing options correlated with income – the lower the income, the more likely the respondent was to select this as their top priority.
- Implementing proposed Lower Boardman River improvements was also correlated with income, but this time higher income residents were more likely to select this as their top priority.
- Interestingly, considering closing Front Street was most popular with both the \$25,000-\$49,999 group and the \$200,000 or more group.

	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$149,999	\$150,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000 or more
Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality	26%	25%	21%	16%	12%
Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)	10%	15%	12%	18%	17%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (widen sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks, more comprehensive snowmelt system, etc.)	8%	15%	12%	11%	15%

Increase downtown housing options	19%	14%	13%	10%	6%
Implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality	1%	9%	9%	14%	14%
Consider closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week	12%	6%	7%	9%	12%

Gender

Results were cross-tabulated by gender, for male and female. The non-binary category did not have enough participation to be included. Key observations and variations across gender groups include:

- Improving stormwater and wastewater management in downtown was the highest priority for female and male respondents, though it was a more popular choice for female respondents.
- A greater proportion of male respondents opted for implementing proposed Lower Boardman River improvements as their top choice.
- On other top choices, the split between female and male respondents was mostly even.

	Female	Male
Improve stormwater and wastewater management in downtown to reduce flooding impacts and protect water quality	26%	17%
Increase parking supply by adding more parking structure(s)	15%	15%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and accessible (widen sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks, more comprehensive snowmelt system, etc.)	13%	12%
Increase downtown housing options	11%	13%
Implement proposed Lower Boardman River improvements, creating more recreation connections to the river and protecting water quality	8%	13%
Consider closing Front Street permanently or during certain days of the week	6%	9%

CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR Q8

Similarities and contrasts between different respondents were also analyzed for the results to Q8 (i.e., "Of the programs and services listed in question 7, which one action will be MOST important?"). Results to Q8, analyzed by the same characteristics as Q6 cross-tabulations, are provided below. In the following tables, the top responses for each category are highlighted in blue, helping to show similarities and differences in priority actions. The top choice for each characteristic is shown in darker blue, while any other services or actions receiving 10% or more are highlighted in lighter blue.

Primary Interest in Downtown Traverse City

- Creating opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown was the top priority amongst all interest groups, except for downtown business owners.
- Helping protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown was the top priority for downtown business owners.
- Downtown visitors placed greater priority on adding more year-round activations and entertainment options than the other interest groups.

- Downtown business owners and residents placed greater priority on attracting new employers and jobs than the other interest groups.

	Downtown business owner	Downtown resident	Downtown employee	Downtown visitor	Live elsewhere in Traverse City	Live in Grand Traverse County outside of Traverse City
Create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown	22%	30%	43%	25%	25%	31%
Help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown	25%	16%	10%	21%	19%	18%
Become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience	7%	10%	11%	14%	18%	9%
Add more year-round activations and entertainment options	5%	9%	5%	11%	7%	6%
Attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies	17%	11%	8%	6%	5%	7%
Make downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrate cultural diversity	5%	6%	7%	9%	7%	9%
Improve the management of parking services	3%	5%	5%	4%	5%	7%
Ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	7%
Provide additional maintenance services (trash, snow removal, flower care, etc.)	1%	4%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Improve marketing of downtown to local residents in Traverse City	7%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%

Age

- Creating opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown was the top priority amongst the younger age groups (25 to 64).
- Helping protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown was the top priority for the oldest analyzed age group (65 to 74).
- For the most part, becoming a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience, making downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrating cultural diversity, and adding more year-round activations and entertainment options were more popular among younger age groups.
- Attracting new employers and jobs was most popular among middle age groups (35 to 64).

	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74
Create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown	35%	29%	29%	31%	23%

Help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown	14%	13%	21%	19%	25%
Become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience	18%	14%	10%	9%	7%
Add more year-round activations and entertainment options	8%	10%	7%	6%	3%
Attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies	4%	11%	8%	8%	5%
Make downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrate cultural diversity	11%	9%	5%	6%	7%
Improve the management of parking services	3%	4%	5%	5%	7%
Ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible	3%	3%	5%	5%	9%
Provide additional maintenance services (trash, snow removal, flower care, etc.)	0%	3%	4%	4%	5%
Improve marketing of downtown to local residents in Traverse City	1%	3%	4%	4%	4%

Annual Household Income

- Creating opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown was the top priority amongst the lower income groups (\$25,000-\$149,999).
- Helping protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown was the top priority for the higher income groups (\$150,000 or more).
- Higher income groups also placed a greater emphasis on attracting new employers and jobs.
- Making downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrating cultural diversity got the highest share of votes for the \$150,000-\$199,999 income group, though it was also popular with the \$25,000-\$99,999 income groups.

	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$149,999	\$150,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000 or more
Create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown	40%	33%	33%	19%	21%
Help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown	18%	11%	18%	21%	22%
Become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience	9%	15%	14%	10%	15%
Add more year-round activations and entertainment options	3%	9%	6%	13%	6%
Attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies	1%	3%	10%	9%	14%
Make downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrate cultural diversity	9%	8%	5%	10%	6%
Improve the management of parking services	7%	3%	2%	5%	4%
Ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible	4%	8%	2%	3%	4%
Provide additional maintenance services (trash, snow removal, flower care, etc.)	2%	4%	5%	5%	3%

Improve marketing of downtown to local residents in Traverse City	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%
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Gender

- Creating opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown and helping protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown came first and second, respectively, for both female and male respondents' top priority.
- Female respondents placed a greater emphasis on becoming a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience.
- Male respondents placed a greater emphasis on attracting new employers and jobs.

	Female	Male
Create opportunities for affordable and local workforce housing in downtown	30%	26%
Help protect and promote local independent businesses in downtown	19%	15%
Become a national leader for sustainability and climate resilience	14%	9%
Add more year-round activations and entertainment options	6%	9%
Attract new employers and jobs, including working to fill office vacancies	6%	10%
Make downtown more inclusive and welcoming and celebrate cultural diversity	7%	7%
Improve the management of parking services	5%	4%
Ensure transit (BATA system) is convenient and accessible	6%	4%
Provide additional maintenance services (trash, snow removal, flower care, etc.)	2%	6%
Improve marketing of downtown to local residents in Traverse City	2%	4%