

# Diverse Downtowns

75 of the region's downtowns were analyzed, and each were assigned a Diversity Score and a Pandemic Impact Score on scales of 1–100, with one being the most diverse and least impacted.

This effort found that more diverse downtowns were generally less impacted by the economic shutdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All 75 of the downtowns that were analyzed are listed, along with their Pandemic Impact Scores, in order from most to least diverse.



Disclaimer:  
This is an analysis of visits to and trade areas of the region's downtowns. However, it is not an economic impact analysis. Retail sales were not part of this body of work.

Princeton | 33  
West Chester Borough | 34  
Norristown Borough | 37  
Burlington City | 46  
Collingswood Borough | 45  
Upper Darby Township | 32  
Lower Merion Township (Ardmore) | 38  
Glassboro Borough | 39  
Phoenixville Borough | 44  
Haddonfield Borough | 35  
Woodbury City | 43  
Lansdowne Borough | 49  
Trenton (State Street) | 58  
Bristol Borough | 26  
Lansdale Borough | 54  
Doylestown Borough | 29  
Bordentown City | 52  
Riverside Township | 59  
Mount Holly Township | 48  
Kennett Square Borough | 48  
Chester City (Avenue of the States) | 41  
New Hope Borough | 14  
Swarthmore Borough | 60  
Media Borough | 40  
Gloucester City | 50

Pottstown Borough | 39  
Coatesville City | 56  
Moorestown Township | 54  
Paulsboro Borough | 58  
Swedesboro Borough | 43  
Pitman Borough | 50  
Lower Merion Township (Bryn Mawr) | 54  
Quakertown Borough | 35  
Philadelphia (52nd Street) | 33  
Radnor Township (Wayne) | 50  
Ambler Borough | 61  
Palmyra Borough | 47  
Marcus Hook Borough | 57  
Malvern Borough | 45  
Narberth Borough | 59  
Downingtown Borough | 42  
Haddon Township (Westmont) | 38  
Merchantville Borough | 52  
Pennsauken Township | 49  
Camden City (Federal Street) | 42  
Sellersville Borough | 75  
Darby Borough | 55  
Maple Shade Township | 58  
Harrison Township (Mullica Hill) | 27  
Langhorne Borough | 52

Newtown Borough | 42  
Berlin Borough | 61  
Norwood Borough | 67  
Hightstown Borough | 55  
Haddon Heights Borough | 58  
Hatboro Borough | 47  
Ridley Park Borough | 69  
Perkasie Borough | 53  
Audubon Borough (Merchant St.) | 58  
Pine Hill Borough | 59  
Jenkintown Borough | 52  
Lower Merion Township (Haverford) | 75  
Riverton Borough | 70  
Cheltenham Township (Glenside) | 55  
Yardley Borough | 49  
Souderton Borough | 73  
Haverford Township (Oakmont) | 59  
Morrisville Borough | 60  
Telford Borough | 59  
Westville Borough | 64  
Wenonah Borough | 58  
Barrington Borough | 74  
Haverford Township (Brookline) | 66  
East Lansdowne Borough | 60  
Laurel Springs Borough | 81

# Characteristics that **reduced** the pandemic's impact:

Downtowns with the following characteristics were generally less impacted by the pandemic than their peers.

## Development

Recent mixed-use, residential, and retail developments within the downtowns increased diversity as well as resiliency.

## Diversity

Downtowns with diverse built environments, demographics, local economies, mix of uses, and transportation options, were less impacted.

## People

Diverse and permanent residential populations located within the downtowns provided retailers with customers even as people stayed close to home.

## Trails

Existing Circuit Trails connected downtowns with open space and enabled alternative modes of transportation.

## Walkability

Historic downtowns with more pedestrian-friendly built environments had greater resiliency.

# Characteristics that **exacerbated** the pandemic's impact:

Downtowns that lacked the characteristics found to reduce the pandemic's impact, or that were more greatly defined by the following characteristics, were generally more impacted by the pandemic than their peers.

## **Cars**

Auto-oriented downtowns with lower Walk Scores and more cars per household were more impacted by the pandemic.

## **Colleges**

Downtowns that are overly-reliant on these anchor institutions were less resilient during the pandemic.

## **Goods & Services**

As the share of Neighborhood Goods & Services (NGS) retailers increased in a downtown, so did the pandemic's impact.

## **Transit**

The pandemic significantly reduced transit ridership, and this impact had a ripple effect in transit-oriented downtowns.

## **Vacancy**

The pandemic had a greater impact as downtown vacancy rates increased.

# Diverse Downtowns | Norristown Borough, PA

For the 75 downtowns analyzed, each were assigned a Diversity Score and a Pandemic Impact Score on scales of 1—100, with one being the most diverse and least impacted. The more diverse downtowns were generally less impacted by the pandemic.

Norristown has a historic and walkable downtown, and a robust residential population that is one of the most diverse in the region. It is also in the top ten with regards to its number of civic and office uses, and it has a relatively healthy mix of retail types. These qualities are why Norristown is tied for second place with regards to overall diversity, receiving a Diversity Score of 26.

The downtown's overall diversity most likely helped make it more resilient during the pandemic, which is reflected in its Pandemic Impact Score of 37. Only ten other downtowns were less impacted by the pandemic than Norristown.



26

## Diversity Score

*Built environment, mix of uses, population, transportation, and types of downtowns*



37

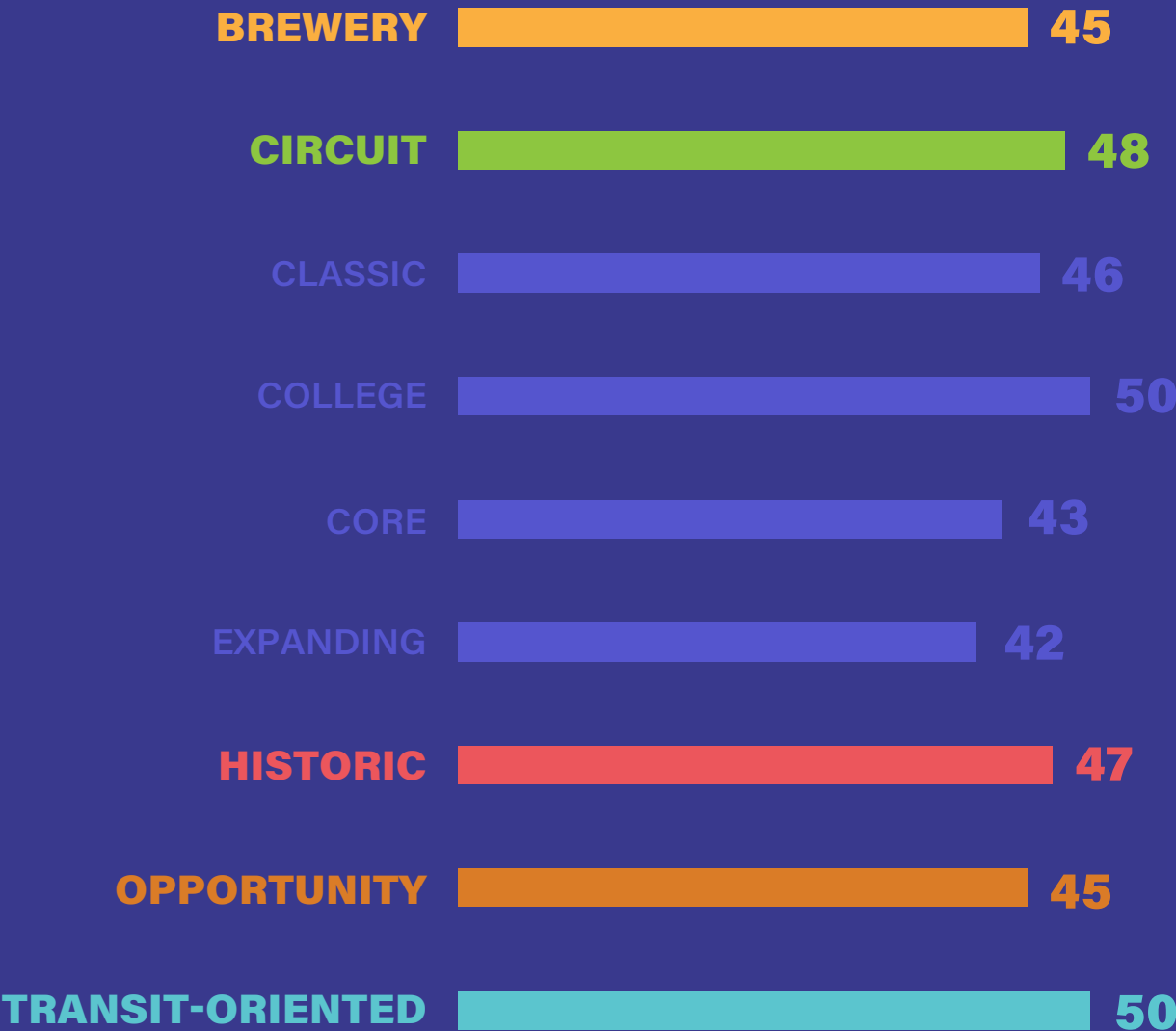
## Pandemic Impact Score

*Visits and trade area pre-pandemic, and during the shut-down and reopening periods*

# Downtown Typologies

Nine downtown typologies were identified and the average Pandemic Impact Score was determined for each: *Brewery (45), Circuit (48), Classic (46), College (50), Core (43), Expanding (42), Historic (47), Opportunity (45), and Transit-Oriented (50).*

In general, more typologies equated to a lower Pandemic Impact Score. Norristown is considered to be five typologies: *Brewery, Circuit, Historic, Opportunity, and Transit-Oriented.* Downtowns that are considered to be five typologies had an average Pandemic Impact Score of 42.

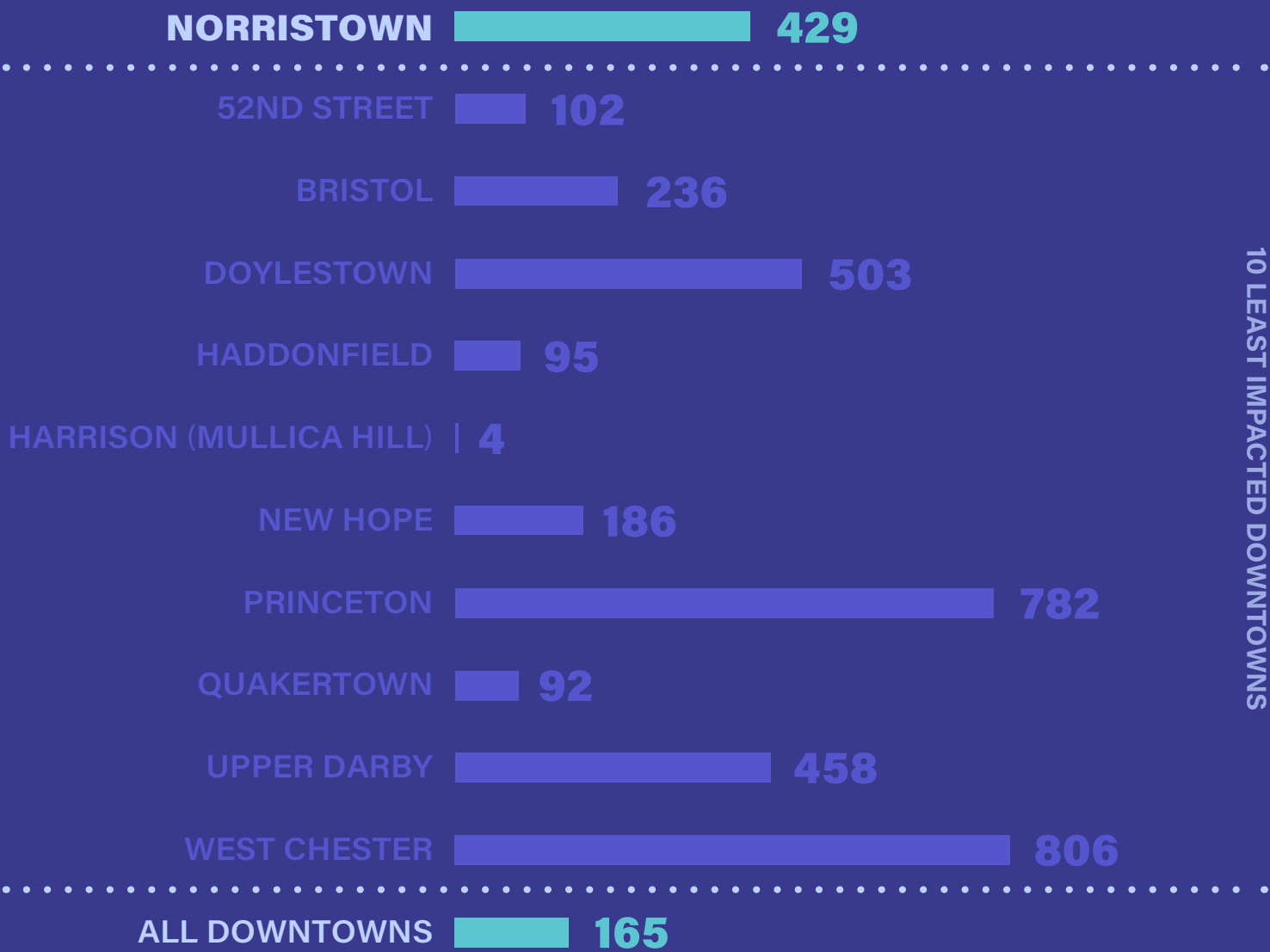


# Downtown Population

A negative correlation between the estimated population of the region’s downtowns and the Pandemic Impact Score was identified. In other words, the larger the downtown population, the smaller the impact.

In 2019, the population in Norristown’s downtown was estimated to be 429, compared to the average of 165 for all downtowns and 326 for the least impacted downtowns.

Norristown’s downtown population is one of the most diverse for the region with regards to demographics, with the Black, Hispanic, and White populations accounting for 37%, 50%, and 26%, respectively.



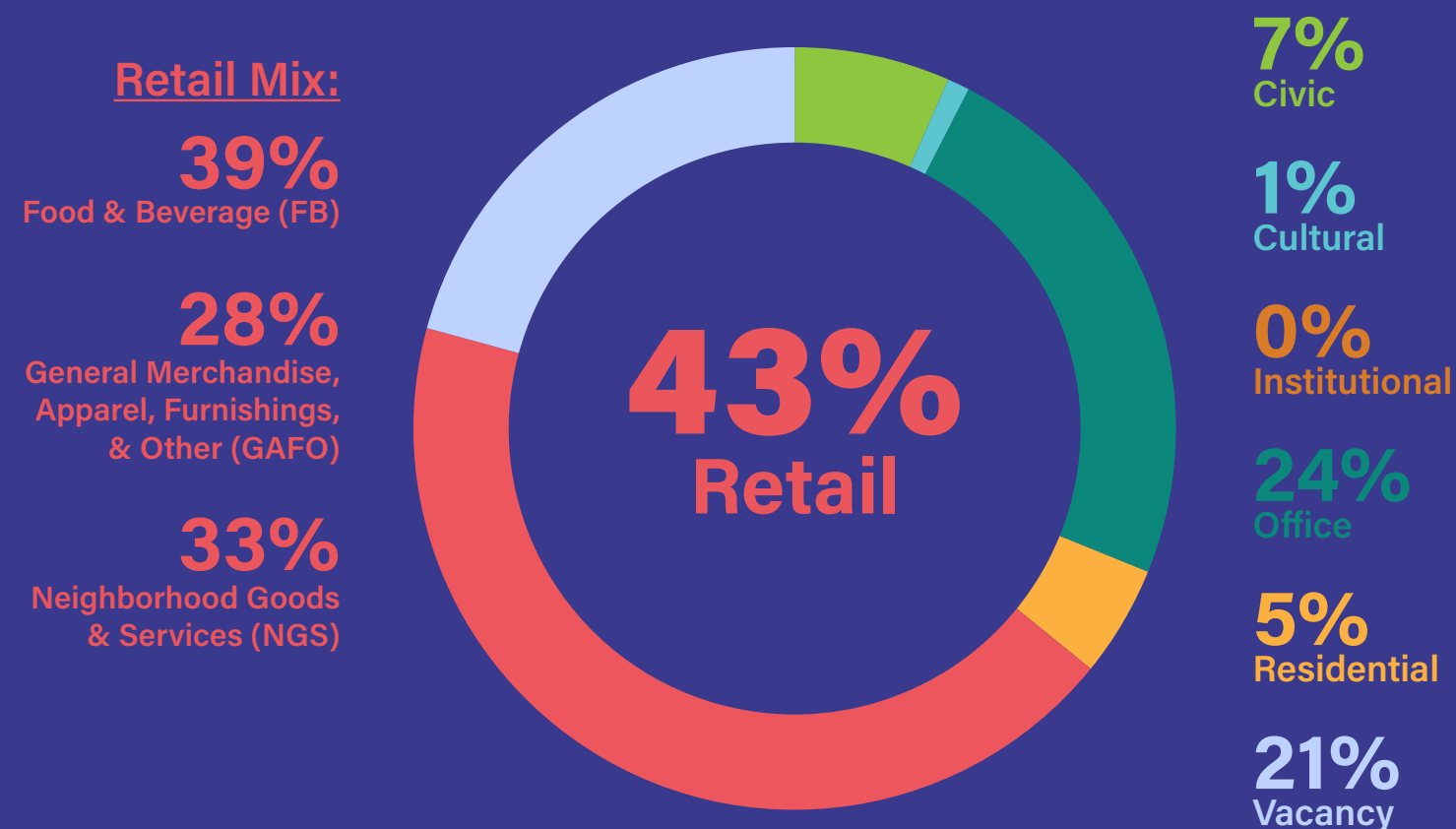
## Mix of Uses

Retail accounts for 43% of the uses in Norristown, which is much lower than the averages of 57% for all downtowns and 60% for the least impacted downtowns.

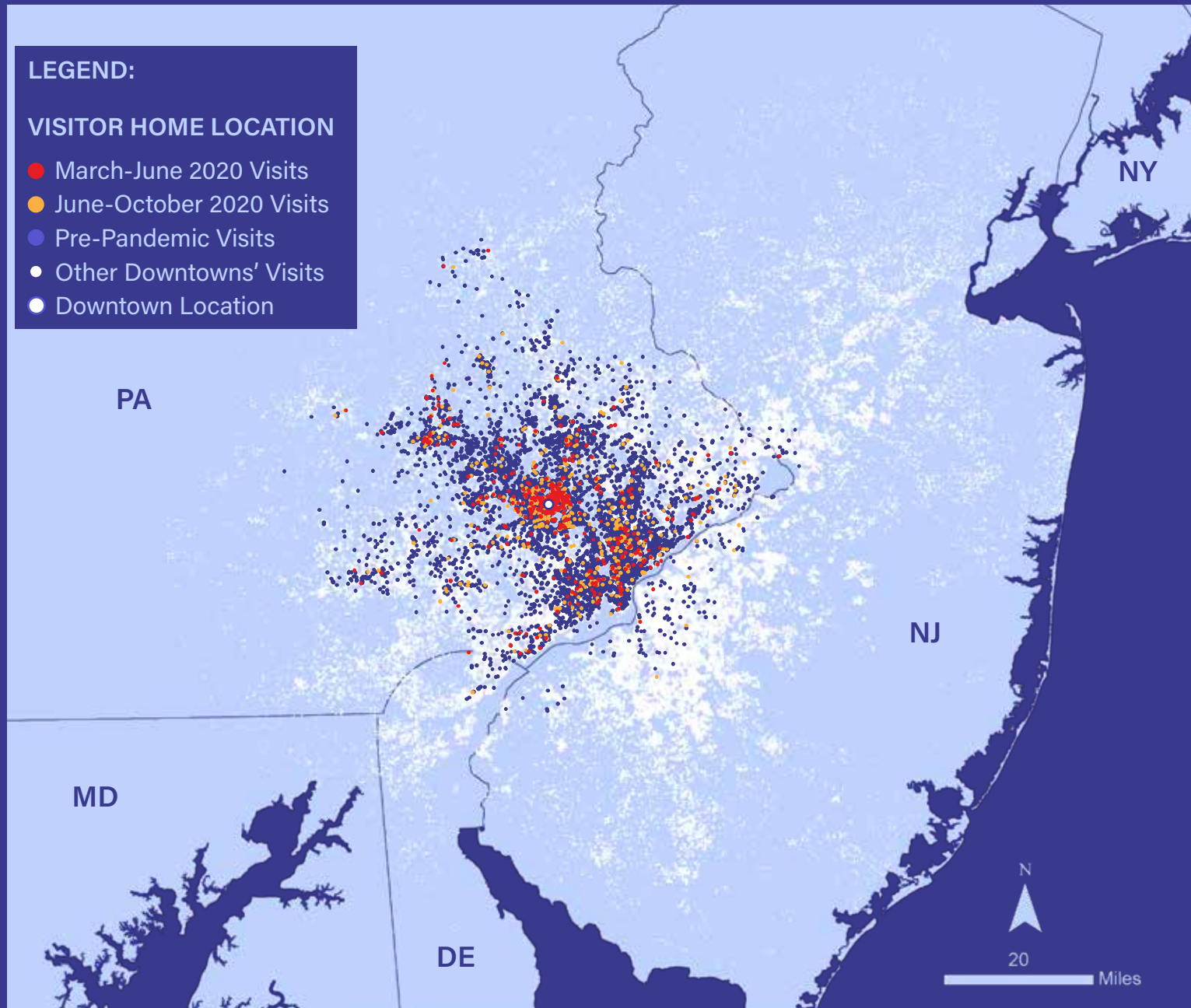
In the least impacted downtowns, *Food & Beverage* (FB) retailers accounted for a smaller share at 30%, while *General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings & Other* (GAFO) retailers accounted for a larger share 38%. On average, as the share of each of these increased the Pandemic Impact Score decreased.

Conversely, *Neighborhood Goods & Services* (NGS) retailers made up a smaller share of 30% in the least impacted downtowns. In general, as the share of NGS retailers increased, so did the Pandemic Impact Score.

Lastly, Norristown has one of the highest vacancy rates in the region. On average, as the vacancy rate increased, so did the Pandemic Impact Score.







## Visits to Downtown

Geolocated, deidentified cellphone location data was analyzed to determine the pandemic's impact on visits to the region's downtowns and their trade areas. Visits to Norristown were as follows:

### ● Pre-Pandemic

Delaware: 0.3%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 98.5%
New Jersey: 1.2%	

### ● Shutdown | March 13 - June 15, 2020

Delaware: 0.2%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 99.3%
New Jersey: 0.5%	

### ● Reopening | June 16 - October 31, 2020

Delaware: 0.3%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 98.8%
New Jersey: 0.9%	



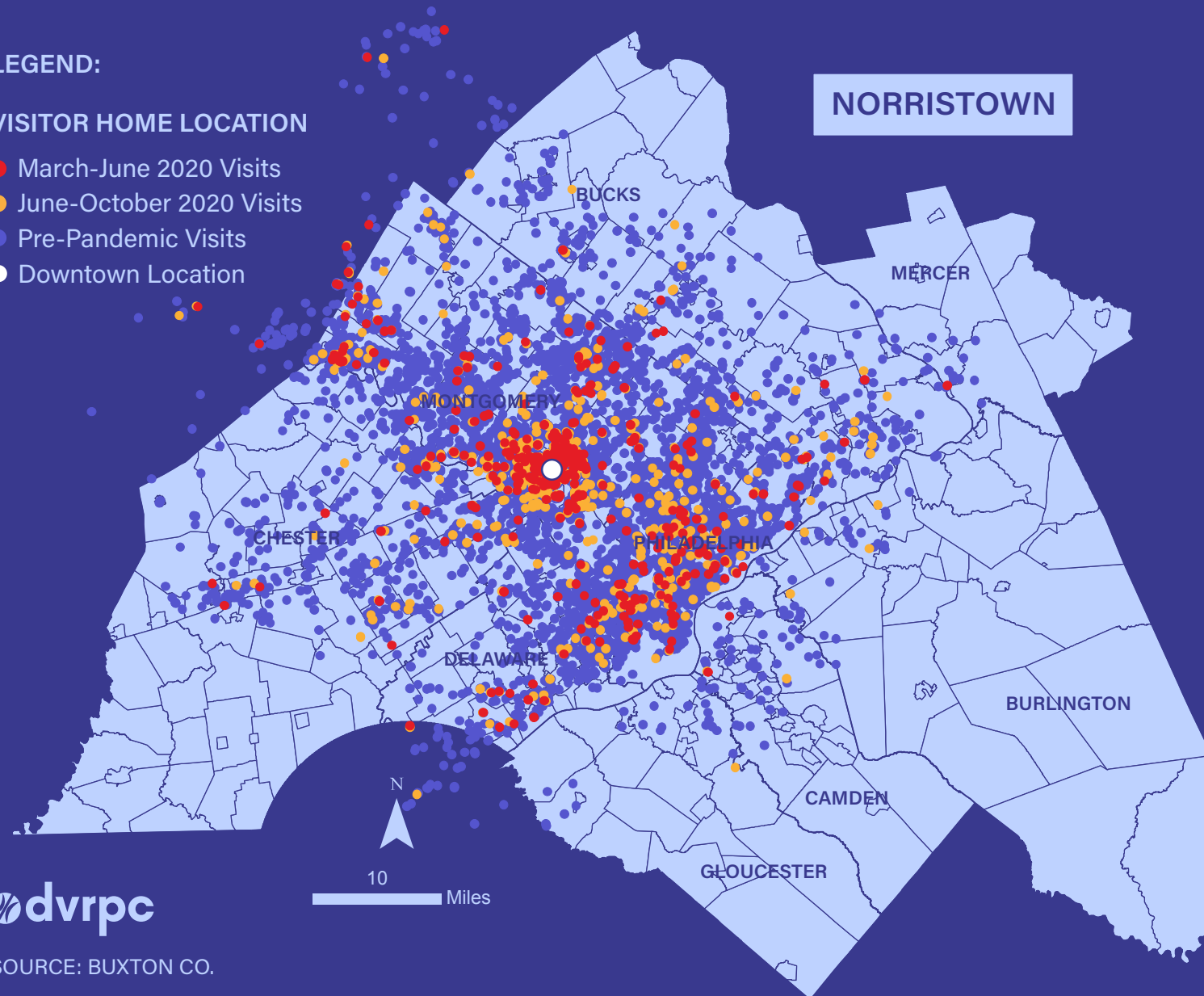
SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



LEGEND:

VISITOR HOME LOCATION

- March-June 2020 Visits
- June-October 2020 Visits
- Pre-Pandemic Visits
- Downtown Location



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.

## Visits to Downtown

Pre-pandemic, visitors to Norristown came from Bucks, Camden, Chester, Delaware, Mercer, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties, as well as from beyond the region. During the pandemic, most visits came from Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties.

Between August 2018 and March 2020, 12,126 people visited the downtown, which was significantly more than the average of 8,800 visits for all of the downtowns.

During the shutdown (March 13 - June 15) there were 653 visits, and during the reopening period (June 16 - October 31) there were 863 visits to Norristown.

# Shutdown Impact

March 13 - June 15, 2020

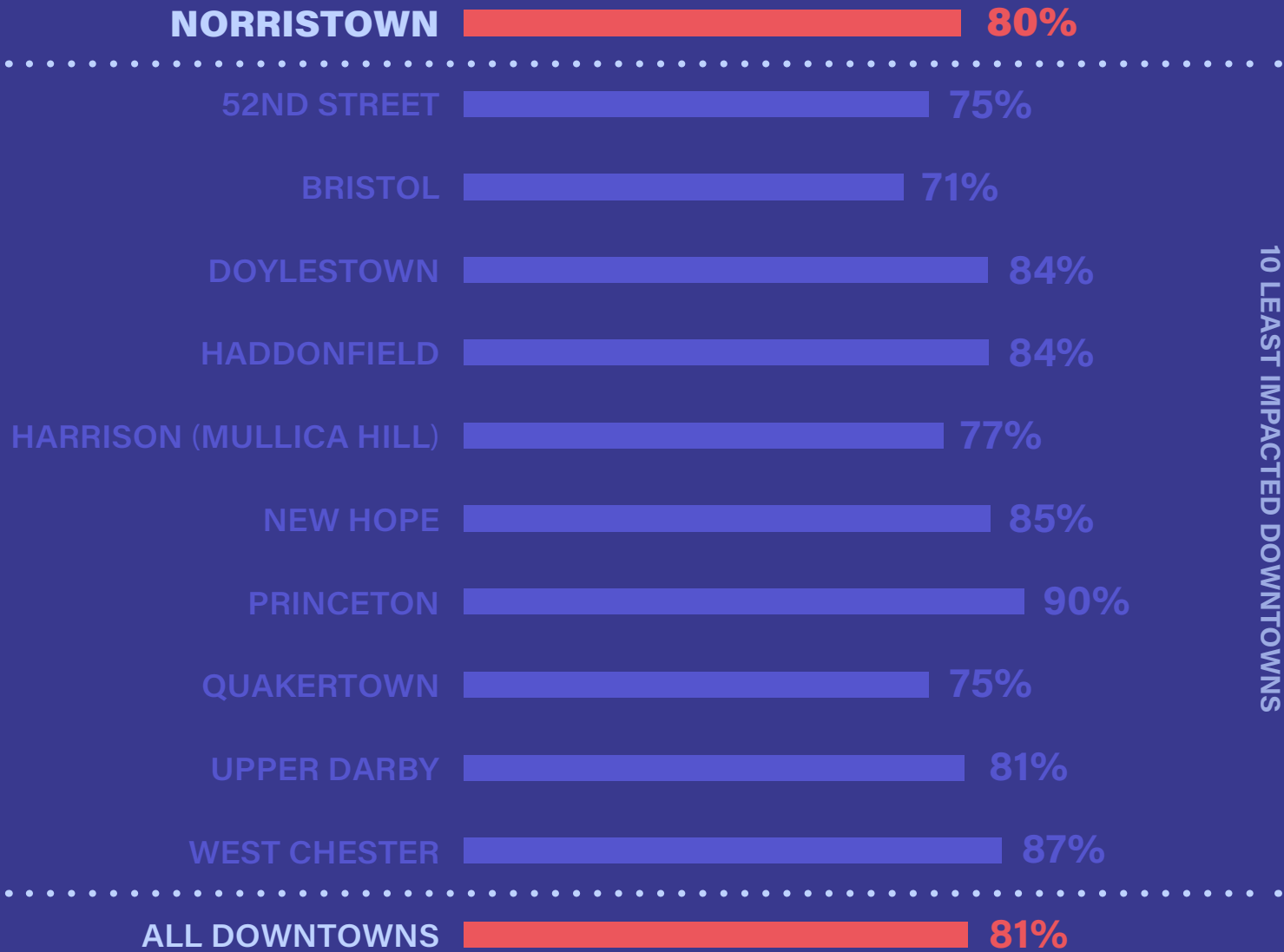
During the economic shutdown, there were 653 visits to Norristown compared to 3,252 visits during the same period in 2019. This equated to an 80% reduction.

The average number of visits during the shutdown period was 439 compared to 2,450 visits during the same period in 2019, which equated to an average reduction of 81%.

Gloucester City's downtown had the smallest reduction in visits at 66%, and the average for the least impacted downtowns was 81%.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS

# Reopening Rebound

June 16 - October 31, 2020

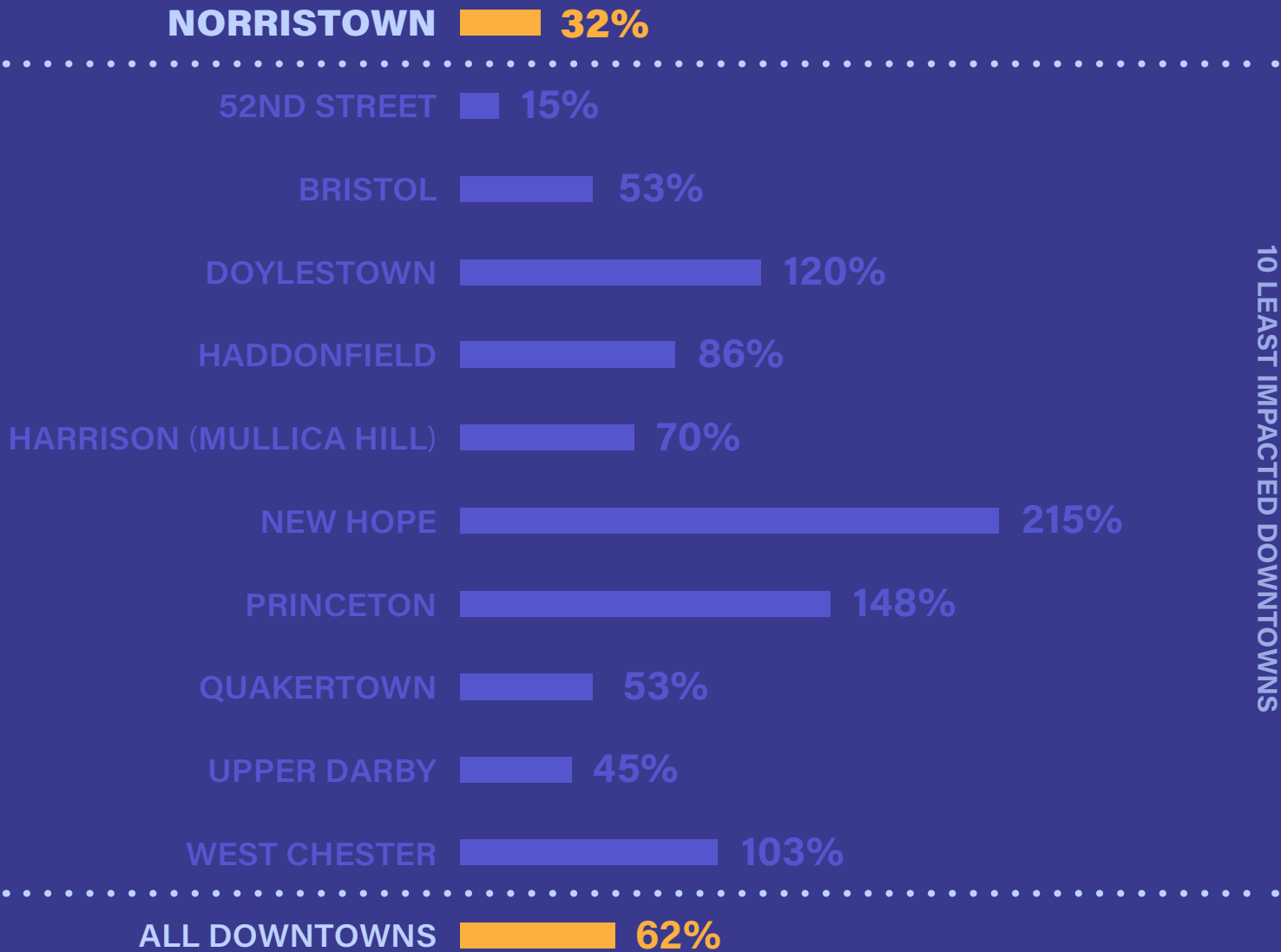
Visits to Norristown increased by 32% during the reopening period to a total of 863 visits. This was 78% fewer than the 3,951 visits that occurred during the same period in 2019.

On average, visits increased by 62% for all downtowns, to approximately 700 visits, and by 91% for the least impacted downtowns, to approximately 1,700 visits.

New Hope observed the greatest increase at 215%, with more than 2,800 visits during that time.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



# Trade Area Recovery

(Drive Time in Minutes)

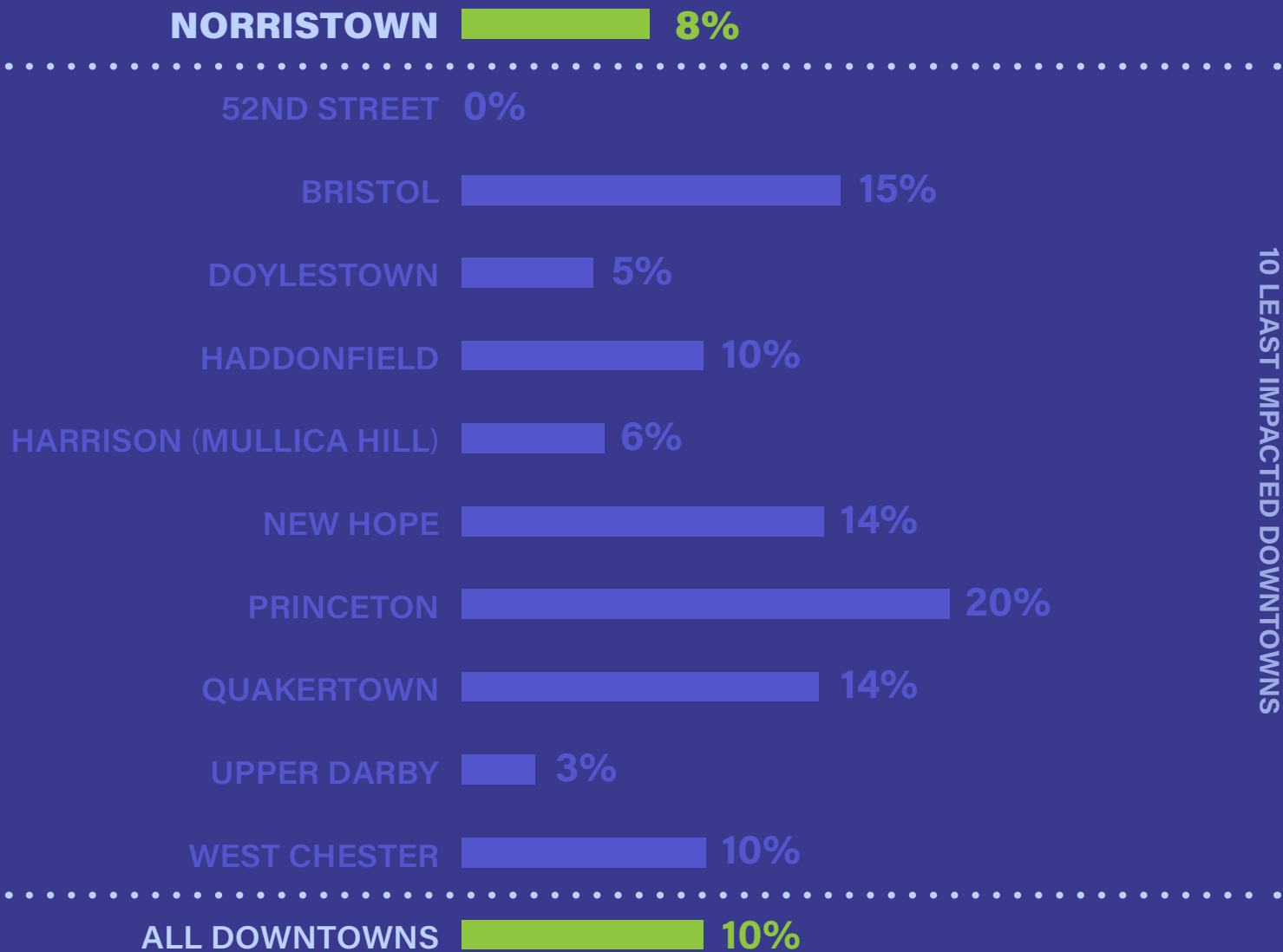
Norristown’s pre-pandemic trade area was a 40 minute drive time, and the trade area shrank by 15% during the shutdown to 34 minutes. During reopening, the trade area had an 8% recovery to 37 minutes.

The average pre-pandemic trade area was 31 minutes, with a 23% reduction during the shutdown down to 24 minutes. The average recovery was 10% for all downtowns up to 27 minutes.

At 69 minutes, New Hope was the only downtown with a trade area that extended beyond an hour. It was also the only downtown to have a larger trade area during reopening (72 minutes) than it did pre-pandemic.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS