

# 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 | Pottstown 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.

Pottstown's downtown is walkable, and it has a diverse and relatively robust residential population. It also has a healthy mix of retail types, and a number of cultural and office uses. However, it lacks the number of civic uses that other downtowns have, and it has the 4th highest vacancy rate in the region. These qualities are why Pottstown received a Diversity Score of 44, which indicates that it is slightly more diverse than the average downtown.

The downtown received a Pandemic Impact Score of 39, which makes it the 14th least impacted downtown and suggests that there may be ways to increase diversity in order to fortify what is already a relatively resilient downtown.

44

## Diversity Score

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

39

## Pandemic Impact Score

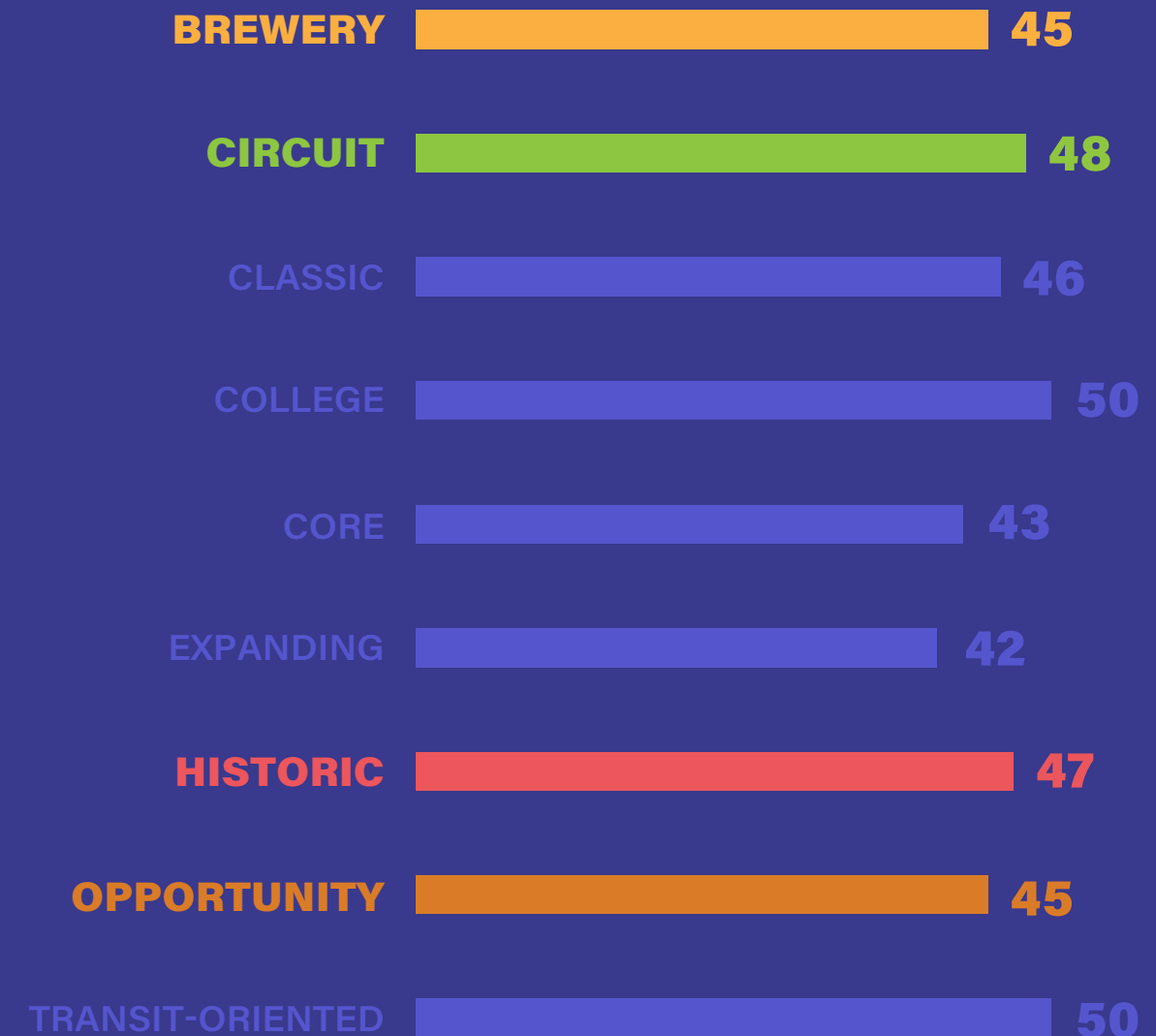
*Visits and trade area pre-pandemic, and during the shut-down and reopening periods*

# 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. Pottstown is considered to be four typologies: *Brewery*, *Circuit* (although the trail has not yet been built), *Historic*, and *Opportunity*. Downtowns that are considered to be four typologies had an average Pandemic Impact Score of 44.

It is worth noting that *Circuit* downtowns that have not yet built their Circuit Trail had an average score of 53, compared to a score of 48 for those that have an existing trail.



# Downtown Population

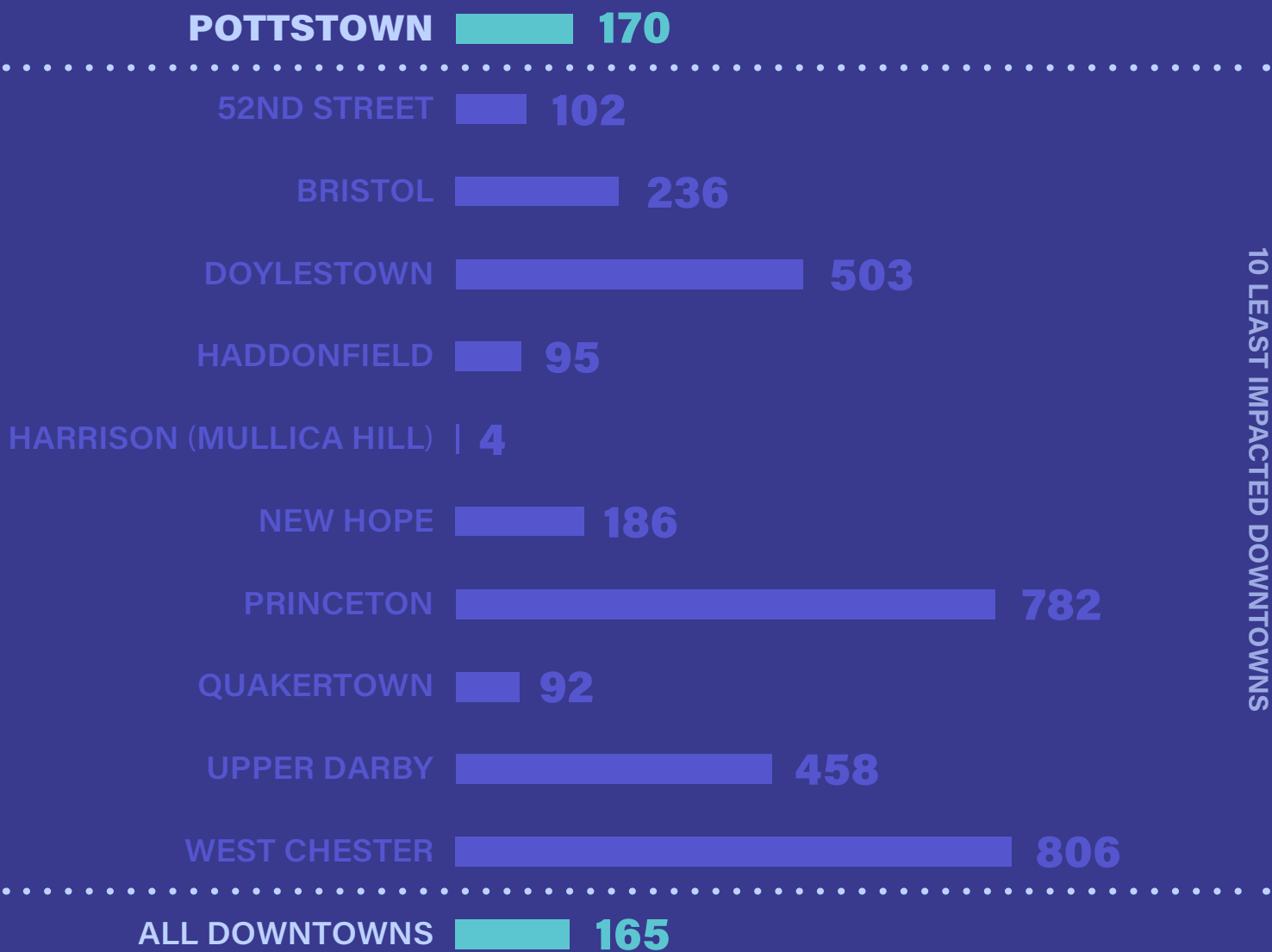
A negative correlation between the estimated population of the region’s downtowns and the Pandemic Impact Score was identified. In other words, the larger the downtown population, the smaller the impact.

In 2019, the population in Pottstown’s downtown was estimated to be 170, compared to the average of 165 for all downtowns and 326 for the least impacted downtowns.

Pottstown’s population is one of the most diverse with regards to demographics, with the Black, Hispanic, and White populations accounting for 32%, 18%, and 51%, respectively.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



## Mix of Uses

Retail accounts for 58% of the uses in Pottstown, which is slightly higher than the average of 57% for all downtowns, and slightly less than the average of 60% for the least impacted downtowns.

In the least impacted downtowns, the share of *Food & Beverage* (FB) retailers was nearly the same as Pottstown at 30%, while the share of *General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings & Other* (GAFO) retailers was lower at 38%. On average, as the share of each of these increased the Pandemic Impact Score decreased.

*Neighborhood Goods & Services* (NGS) retailers made up a larger share of 30% in the least impacted downtowns, and the average vacancy rate in the least impacted downtowns was significantly lower at 7.8%. In general, as the share of NGS retailers or the vacancy rate increased, so did the Pandemic Impact Score.

### Retail Mix:



1%  
Civic

5%  
Cultural

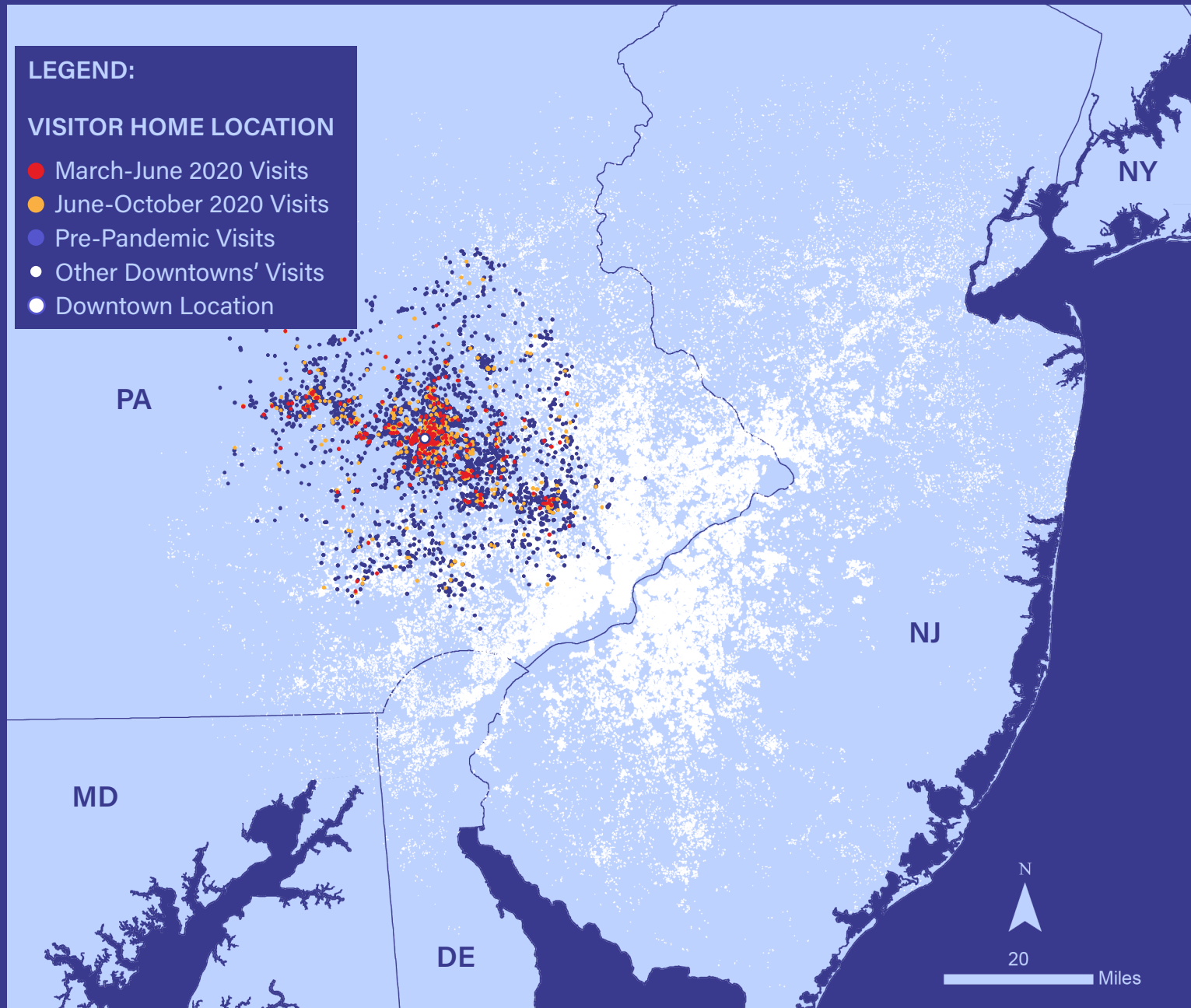
0%  
Institutional

5%  
Office

1%  
Residential

29%  
Vacancy





## 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 Pottstown were as follows:

### ● Pre-Pandemic

Delaware: 0.0%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 100.0%
New Jersey: 0.0%	

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

Delaware: 0.0%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 100.0%
New Jersey: 0.0%	

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

Delaware: 0.0%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 100.0%
New Jersey: 0.0%	

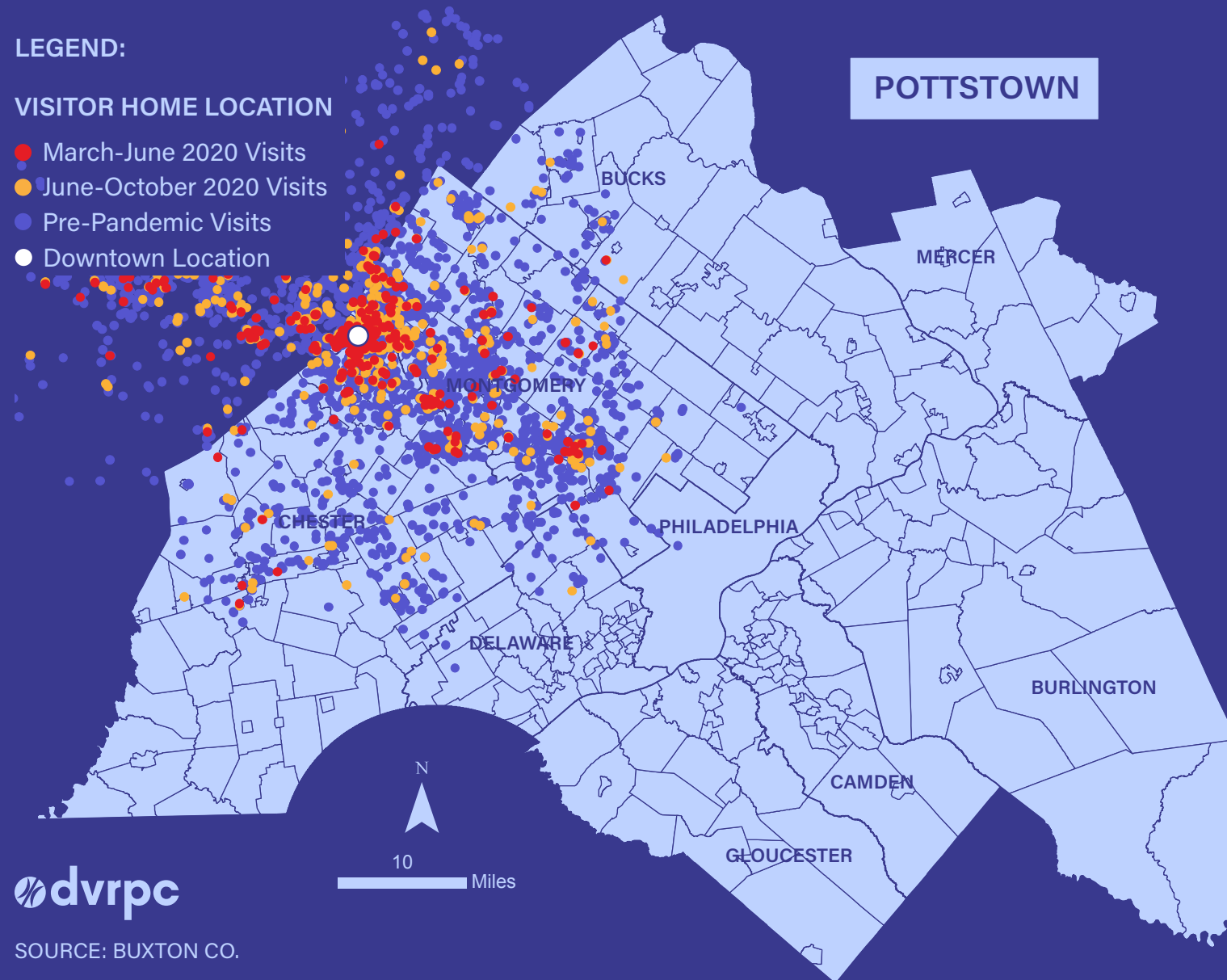




LEGEND:

VISITOR HOME LOCATION

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



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.

## Visits to Downtown

Before the pandemic, visitors to Pottstown primarily came from Chester and Montgomery Counties, and from beyond the region as well. During the pandemic, visitors mostly came from nearby portions of Chester and Montgomery Counties.

Between August 2018 and March 2020, 7,410 people visited the downtown, which was slightly less than the average of 8,800 visits for all of the downtowns.

During the shutdown (March 13 - June 15) there were 498 visits, and during the reopening period (June 16 - October 31) there were 803 visits to Pottstown.

# Shutdown Impact

March 13 - June 15, 2020

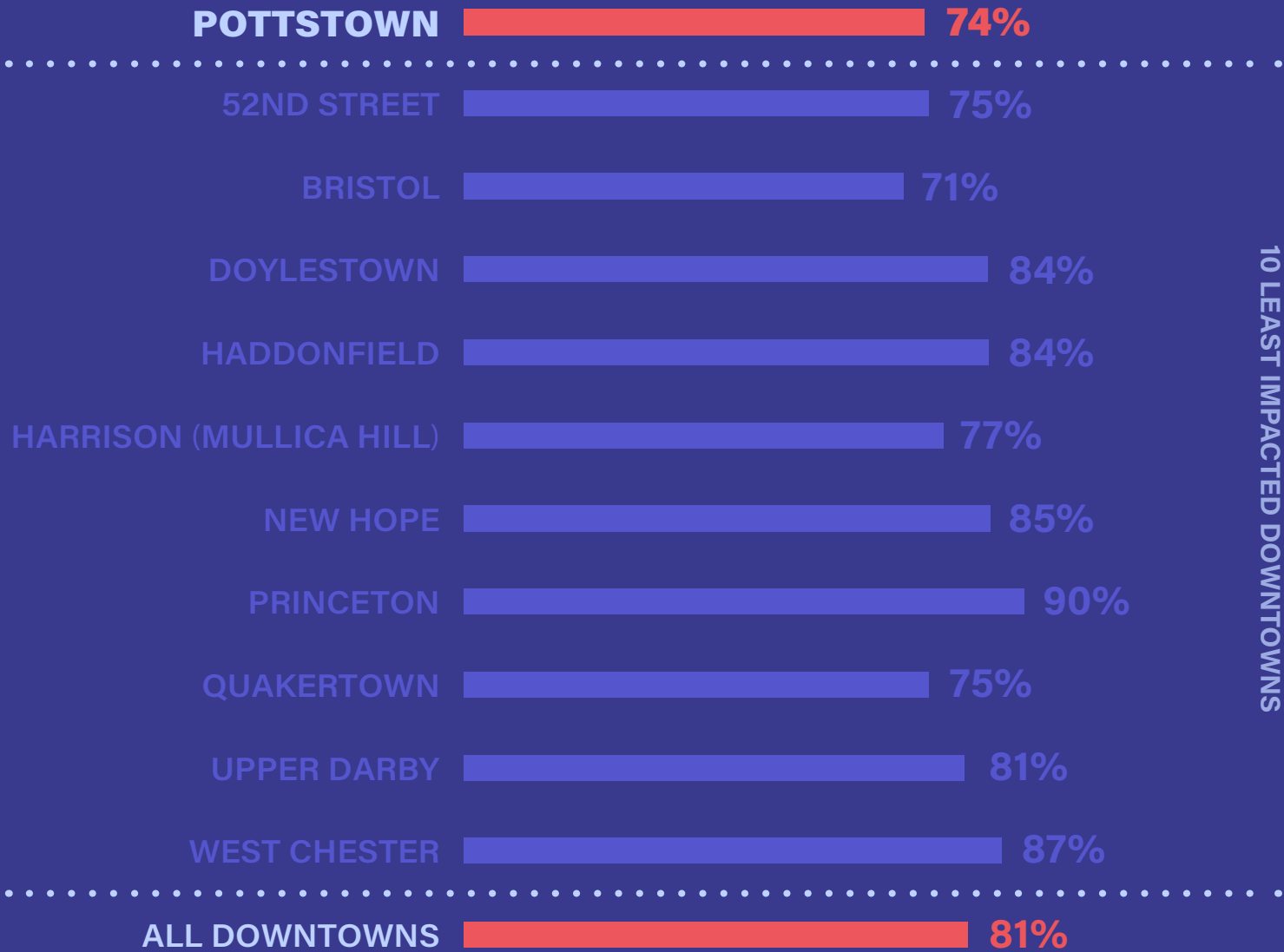
During the economic shutdown, there were 498 visits to Pottstown compared to 1,885 visits during the same period in 2019. This equated to a 74% reduction.

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

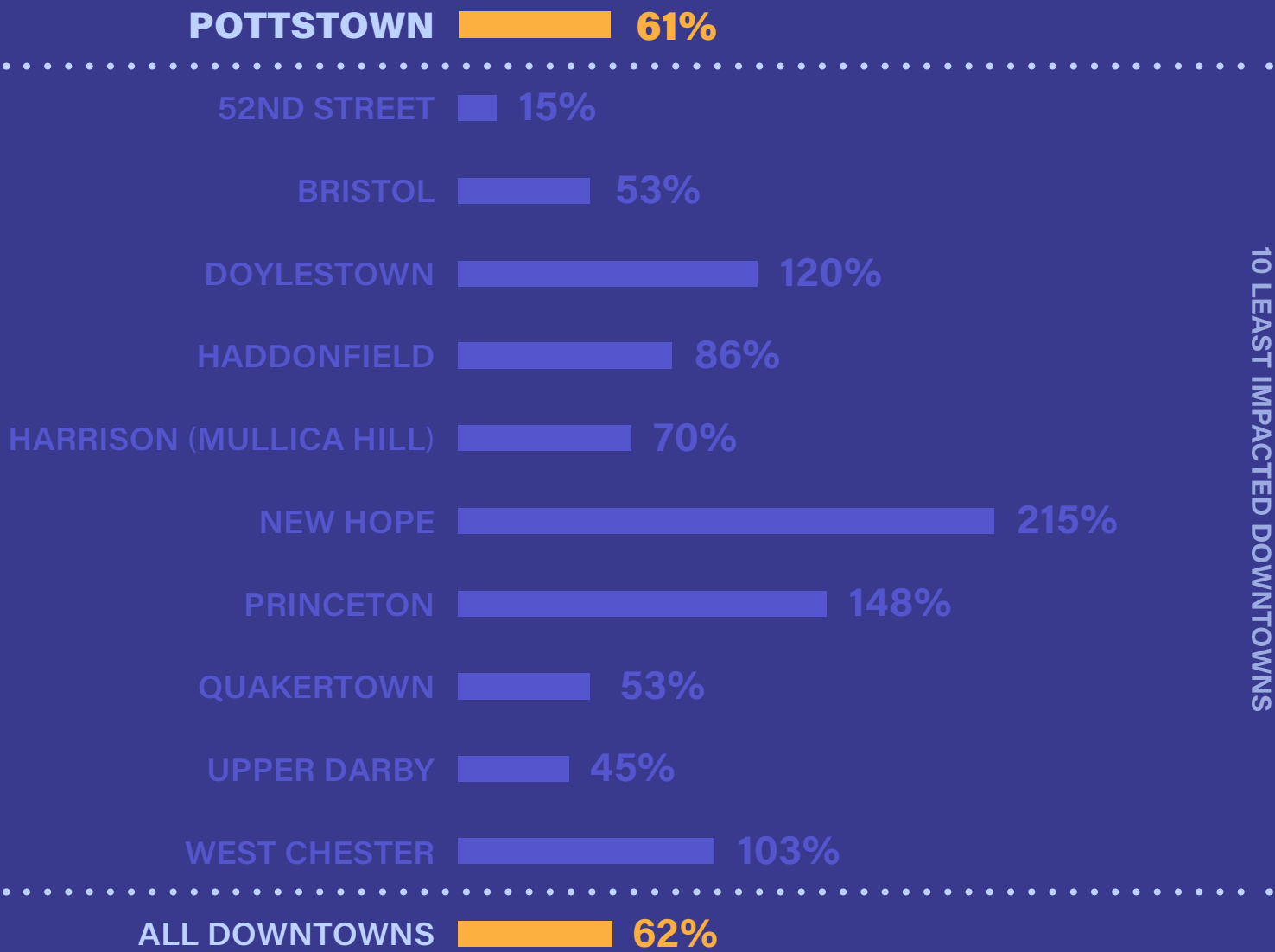
Visits to Pottstown increased by 61% during the reopening period to a total of 803 visits. This was 70% fewer than the 2,635 visits that occurred during the same period in 2019.

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.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS

# Trade Area Recovery

(Drive Time in Minutes)

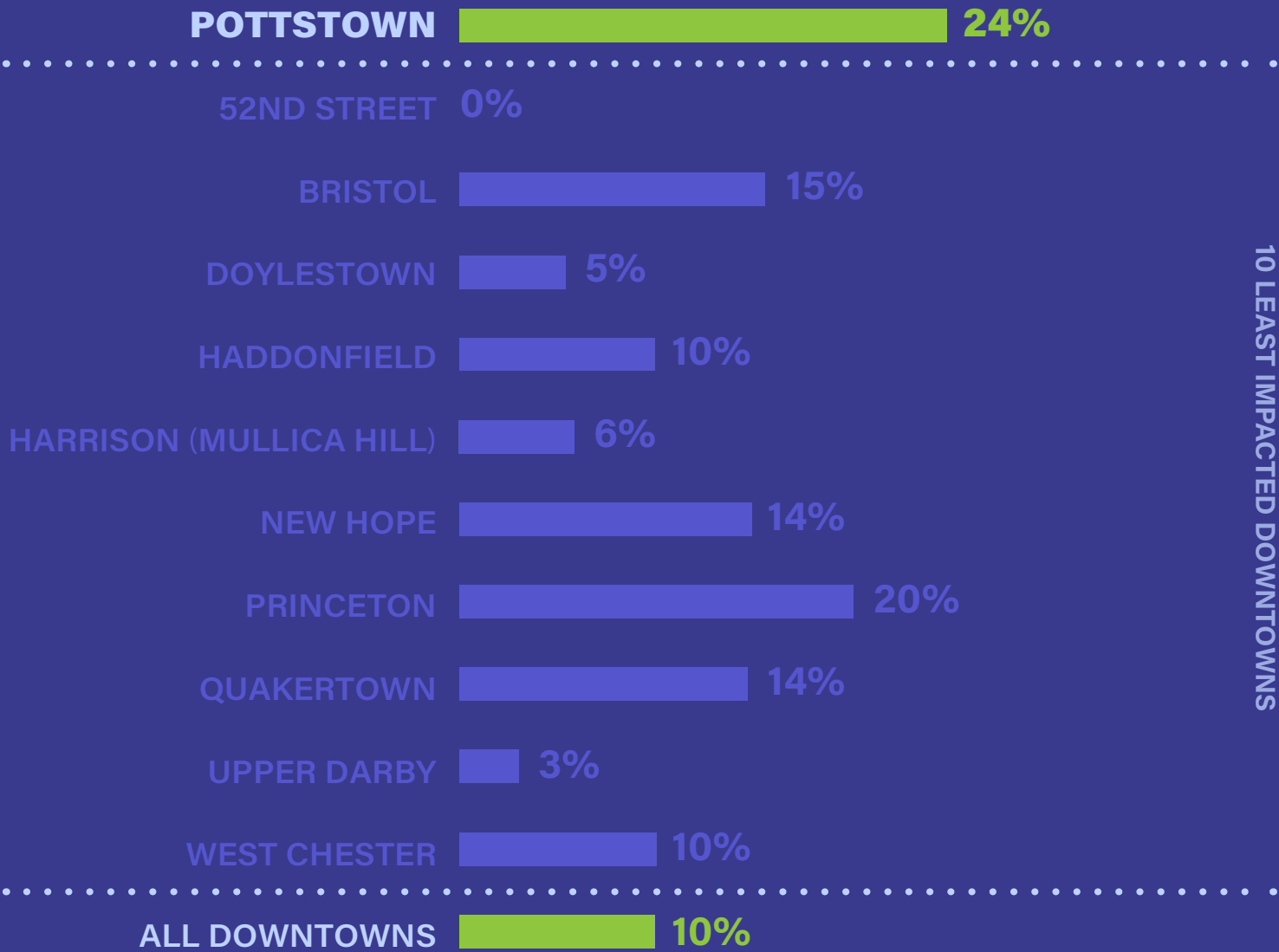
Pottstown’s pre-pandemic trade area was a 29 minute drive time, and the trade area shrank by 31% during the shutdown to 20 minutes. During reopening, the trade area had a 24% recovery, the 8th highest, to 27 minutes.

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