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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics that reduced the pandemic’s impact:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtowns with the following characteristics were generally less impacted by the pandemic than their peers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cars</strong></td>
<td>Auto-oriented downtowns with lower Walk Scores and more cars per household were more impacted by the pandemic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleges</strong></td>
<td>Downtowns that are overly-reliant on these anchor institutions were less resilient during the pandemic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goods &amp; Services</strong></td>
<td>As the share of Neighborhood Goods &amp; Services (NGS) retailers increased in a downtown, so did the pandemic’s impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transit</strong></td>
<td>The pandemic significantly reduced transit ridership, and this impact had a ripple effect in transit-oriented downtowns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vacancy</strong></td>
<td>The pandemic had a greater impact as downtown vacancy rates increased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diverse Downtowns | Princeton, NJ

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.

Princeton's downtown has one of the largest and most diverse populations, and it is also one of the most walkable downtowns in the region. It has a number of cultural and office uses in the downtown, as well as a healthy mix of retail types. As a result, Princeton was determined to be the most diverse of the downtowns, and it has a Diversity Score of 24.

Princeton's social and economic diversity, and its walkable built environment most likely helped mitigate the pandemic's impact. With a Pandemic Impact Score of 33, Princeton was one of the 10 least impacted downtowns.
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. Princeton is considered to be four typologies: Brewery, College, Expanding, and Historic. Downtowns considered to be four typologies had an average Pandemic Impact Score of 44.
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, Princeton’s downtown population was estimated to be 782, compared to an average of 165 for all downtowns and 326 for the least impacted downtowns. Princeton has the second largest population of the least impacted downtowns.

Princeton’s downtown population is relatively diverse with regards to demographics, with the White, Black, and Hispanic populations accounting for 64%, 11%, and 27% respectively.
Retail accounts for 66% of the uses in Princeton’s downtown. The average was 57% for all downtowns and 60% for the least impacted downtowns.

In the least impacted downtowns, Food & Beverage (FB) makes up a much smaller share of retail uses at 30%, while General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings & Other (GAFO) is nearly equal at 38%. On average as the share of each of these increased, the Pandemic Impact Score decreased.

Conversely, as the share of Neighborhood Goods & Services (NGS) retailers increased so did the Pandemic Impact Score. In the least impacted downtowns, NGS retailers made up 30% of all retail, which is significantly more than in Princeton.

Additionally, 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 Princeton’s downtown were as follows:

- **Pre-Pandemic**
  - Delaware: 0.0%
  - Maryland: 0.0%
  - New Jersey: 85.6%
  - New York: 2.3%
  - Pennsylvania: 13.0%

- **Shutdown | March 13 - June 15, 2020**
  - Delaware: 0.0%
  - Maryland: 0.0%
  - New Jersey: 95.4%
  - New York: 0.1%
  - Pennsylvania: 4.5%

- **Reopening | June 16 - October 31, 2020**
  - Delaware: 0.0%
  - Maryland: 0.0%
  - New Jersey: 91.6%
  - New York: 0.3%
  - Pennsylvania: 8.1%
Pre-pandemic, visitors to Princeton’s downtown came from throughout New Jersey, as well as from southeastern Pennsylvania. During the pandemic, the majority of visits came from areas in and around Mercer County.

Between August 2018 and March 2020, 27,233 people visited the downtown, which is significantly more than the average of 8,800 visits for all of the downtowns.

During the shutdown (March 13 - June 15) there were 711 visits, and during the reopening period (June 16 - October 31) there were 1,763 visits to Princeton's downtown.
Shut down Impact
March 13 - June 15, 2020

During the economic shutdown, there were 711 visits to Princeton compared to 7,156 visits during the same period in 2019. This equated to a reduction of 90%, which was one of the largest reductions observed.

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.
## Reopening Rebound

**June 16 - October 31, 2020**

Visits to Princeton increased by 148% during the reopening period to a total of 1,763 visits. This was 80% fewer than the 8,788 visits that occurred during the same period in 2019.

On average, visits increased by 62% for 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.

### 10 Least Impacted Downtowns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Downtown</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRINCETON</td>
<td>148%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52ND STREET</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRISTOL</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOYLESTOWN</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HADDONFIELD</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULLICA HILL</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW HOPE</td>
<td>215%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAKERTOWN</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER DARBY</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST CHESTER</td>
<td>103%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL DOWNTOWNS</strong></td>
<td><strong>62%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: BUXTON CO.
Princeton’s pre-pandemic trade area was a 41 minute drive time, which shrank by 22% during the shutdown to 32 minutes. The trade area recovered by 20% during the reopening period to 40 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, and that was larger during reopening (72 minutes).