



Downtown Success Indicators

A Review of the Literature

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This literature review is an outcome of the collaboration between the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and University of Illinois Extension. The aim of this project is to provide economic development educators in the North Central Region with necessary information about successful downtowns. Using this information, the economic development educators can assist local economic development and business leaders to improve the health and vibrancy of their respective downtowns.

This literature review represents the first phase of a long term project focused on identifying economically resilient small city downtowns and ultimately creating a searchable database of successful communities. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a better understanding of indicators defining downtown success. This review will summarize characteristics of successful downtowns as described in contemporary literature pertaining to urban planning, downtown revitalization and business development. This analysis will support communities in using data for business development and developing fruitful partnerships with the private sector.

There is ample literature available on strategies and attributes of successful downtowns in big cities. Nonetheless, a stream of literature has evolved in the past decade isolating small city downtowns from big city downtowns. These authors specifically discuss the revitalization strategies and attributes unique to small city downtowns. This literature sporadically mentions indicators to evaluate the

success of a small city downtown. In most cases, these indicators are normative such as principles for creating a successful downtown or subjective such as identification of common attributes among successful downtowns.

So far, Burayidi's 'downtown resilience scorecard' is unarguably the only objective indicator available to assess downtown success.¹ The downtown resilience scorecard was developed through the analysis of fourteen successful small and mid-sized downtowns in America. Although Burayidi's downtown resilience scorecard assesses attributes that are beyond the traditional approach of judging downtown success with retail development, we need a broader sample of downtowns to develop more accurate and detailed indicators for assessing downtown success. Therefore, a consolidated review of the contemporary literature is required to extract quantitative and qualitative indicators defining success in small city downtowns. A literature review would implicitly consider a wider range of cities.

This review considers a wide spectrum of literature from the disciplines of urban planning, urban policy, business development and retailing. The selected literature is partly based on the recommendations made by NCRCRD and partly on author's investigation of related topics. Broadly, the reviewed literature can be categorized into three categories: literature related to 'best places to live'; literature related to downtown 'success stories'; and research-based and empirical literature. However, if we dig into content and methodology, we can classify the literature reviewed into following

nine categories –

1. Books and online resources focusing on best places in America with a focus on livability and tourism. This category of literature does not have a specific focus on downtowns. Crampton's list of 100 best small towns in America², Midwest Living's list of 75 small town getaways³, Money magazine's list of 50 best places to live⁴ and American Planning Association's (APA) list of great neighborhoods⁵ lie in this category.
2. Books and online resources focusing on successful stories of downtowns where there were deliberate effort to overturn the decline. Dane's compilation of the Main Street success stories⁶ and the biographies of Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) winners⁷ lie in this category.
3. Books and academic papers identifying common attributes and strategies for successful downtowns by surveying regionally or nationally acclaimed successful downtowns. Burayidi's book about resilient downtowns⁸, Ferguson's paper about identifying common attributes⁹ and Filion et al.'s paper about identifying factors associated with downtown success¹⁰ lie in this category.
4. Books, academic papers and dissertations identifying strategies for creating successful downtowns by surveying a random set of downtowns. These downtowns are not necessarily the successful ones. Burayidi's compilation of chapters about revitalization of small city downtowns¹¹, Robertson's paper about revitalization of small city downtown¹², Runyan and Huddleson's paper identifying the role of branding¹³ and Tyler's dissertation investigating perceived downtown health¹⁴ lie in this category.
5. Academic papers providing chronological review of downtown revitalization strategies by considering archival literature and planning documents. Robertson's review of downtown revitalization¹⁵ and retail revitalization¹⁶ strategies and Abbott's review of revitalization policies¹⁷ lie in this category.
6. Academic papers focusing only on one or two attributes of downtowns. Strom's paper on cultural institutions¹⁸ and Rypkema's paper about globalization and immigration downtown¹⁹ lie in this category.
7. Nonacademic reports identifying common attributes and strategies for successful downtowns by surveying regionally or nationally acclaimed successful downtowns. Destination Development International's (DDI) report identifying common downtown success attributes²⁰ and Civilis Consultants' report about successful downtowns²¹ lie in this category.
8. Nonacademic reports identifying strategies for creating successful downtowns by considering archival literature and planning documents. Reports created by Gruen²², Urban Models Task Force²³ and Downtown Idea Exchange²⁴ lie in this category.
9. Nonacademic reports focusing on only one or two attributes of downtowns. Moulton's report on downtown housing²⁵ lies in this category.

The indicators of successful downtowns are broadly categorized into ten categories. (Figure 1) However, all categories aim toward getting people

Figure 1: Categories of Indicators

- Downtown retail development
- Downtown housing
- Organization and partnerships
- Downtown traffic generators
- Preservation and rehabilitation
- Immigration and diversity
- Multifunctionality
- Downtown design
- Branding and promotion
- Downtown finance, employment and demographics

downtown so that downtown businesses and services can be more patronized. They focus on offering experiences that are unique and cannot be replicated in suburban shopping districts. Successful downtowns perform well on traditional success indicators such as retail, and they explore new indicators defining success such as housing, immigration, organization and promotion. In this review, we provide an explanation for the importance of each category followed by a synthesis of specific quantitative and qualitative indicators used by authors.

There are some caveats to this literature review, which should be considered while making use of this document.

1. This review uses term such as resilient, vibrant, healthy and successful interchangeably to address downtown success.
2. Most of the literature reviewed for this research pertains to small and medium city downtowns, but a few documents either correspond to cities of all size or they do not specify the scale they are referring to. For example, reports by Moulton, Gruen and Urban Models Task Force do not mention the scale of downtowns.
3. There is no consensus among authors on defining small cities. They have used a variety of criteria to define small cities. For example, Burayidi defines small cities as places with population less than 150,000, Filion et al. define small cities as places with population 100,000 to 500,000, Robertson defines small cities as places with population 25,000 to 50,000, Ferguson defines small cities as places with population 25,000 to 250,000, Tyler researches towns with population 5,000 to 30,000 and Crampton defines small cities as places with population 5,000 to 15,000.
4. The literature related to ‘best places to live’ does not specifically correspond to downtowns but it addresses the whole city.
5. The indicators mentioned in this review are normative in some cases, especially where the authors portray them as the rules and principles for creating successful downtowns.

Retail development has classically been an indicator of downtown health.²⁶ The vibrancy of retail activity downtown attracts a daytime population that reciprocally supports non-retail ventures downtown. Retail sales make a direct and indirect contribution to a city's tax base. Retail development downtown generally takes place in form of street oriented small shops that generate more traffic and lure people to sidewalks and storefronts. Consequently, a multitude of cities follow strategies such as business attraction, retention, expansion and incubation as part of their downtown revitalization strategy.

Cities with strong retail activity downtown have been a choice for authors studying successful downtowns. Downtown retail development has been identified as an important indicator for a successful downtown with its variables such as retail activity, retail scene, street oriented retail, street oriented facades, increased daytime population and sidewalk activity along with quantitative variables such as vacancy rate, longevity of businesses and hours of operation.

Burayidi studies fourteen nationally renowned successful downtowns to develop an approach for creating resilient downtowns. These downtowns have successfully increased their daytime populations.²⁷ Filion et al. conduct a survey of 295 academicians, planners from small metropolitan regions and professionals associated with downtown revitalization. The survey identifies an active retail scene and people on sidewalks as very important success factors for downtowns.²⁸ Using the same survey, Filion et al. identify 19 small metropolitan

regions with successful downtowns. These downtowns have street oriented retail facades attracting the daytime population and activity on sidewalks.²⁹

Robertson mentions street level retail activity as one of the seven guiding principles for successful downtown revitalization after surveying 57 small American cities.³⁰ Although Robertson also highlights centralized retail management and indoor shopping centers as downtown retail revitalization strategies, he prioritizes the street level activity as a vital force retaining pedestrians and businesses downtown. His findings reveal modest success for centralized retail management and indoor shopping centers.³¹ DDI surveys more than 400 downtowns with an 80 item list to identify the 20 most important ingredients of a successful downtown. They find a vibrant retail core as one of the 20 ingredients.³² Drawing from several discussions on social media, Downtown Idea Exchange highlights the importance of an active retail core.³³

Although the importance of active retail downtown is recognized by several authors, only a few propose methods to quantitatively assess downtown retail development. Burayidi proposes a scorecard to check the resiliency of a downtown. This scorecard assigns a full score for retail development if more than 8% of all retail businesses in the city are located downtown. However, the resilient downtowns studied by Burayidi have a wide range of percentage of businesses downtown ranging from 1.5% to 40%.³⁴ Burayidi conducts an assessment of downtown revitalization in five small Wisconsin communities. He uses a set of variables and indicators for measuring downtown (re)development.

He proposes change in total number of businesses downtown over two time periods as one of the indicators.³⁵ A similar indicator that counts total number of new businesses is used by GAMSAs.³⁶ Dane compiles 44 National Main Street program success stories and identifies that on an average these downtowns had 72 new businesses over an average of 10 years of operation.³⁷ Main Street downtowns mentioned in success stories and recognized as GAMSAs winners have made deliberate efforts to improve retail activity downtown. For example, Beaufort, CA recruited businesses through a test market program; Franklin, VA set up successful business retention and recruitment program; and Rogers, AR provided technical assistance to businesses.³⁸

Runyan and Huddleson use a multi-method approach to identify resources that provide competitive advantage to downtowns and list indicators that can assess downtown success. They mention that success of small businesses should be an indicator of downtown success.³⁹ One indicator of success of a small business is its retail sales. However, Tyler offers some caveats for using retail sales data as an indicator for success. Tyler surveys 16 Michigan cities to evaluate factors associated with perceived downtown health. He developed the Health Perception Index (HPI) for making comparisons through correlation analysis. Although he finds a high correlation between the HPI and the evaluation of downtown retail sales by the respondents, he doesn't find a statistical correlation between the HPI and actual retail sales figure.⁴⁰

In addition to total retail businesses downtown, other quantitative indicators include vacancy rate, longevity and hours of operation. The vibrancy of retail activity downtown can be measured by vacancy rate (or alternatively occupancy rate). DDI calls a downtown successful only if it has at least a 97% or higher occupancy rate.⁴¹ Dane notices an

Figure 2: Downtown Retail Development Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of all retail businesses located downtown
- Increase in retail businesses downtown over a time period
- Occupancy rate (or drop in vacancy rate)
- Longevity of businesses (or turnover rate)

Qualitative

- Retail activity
- Daytime population
- Business mix
- Flux in downtown businesses

average drop in vacancy rate from 21% to 5% in the Main Street success stories.⁴² The drop in vacancy rate is used as an indicator by GAMSAs.⁴³ Burayidi uses occupancy rate to measure downtown (re)development. However, he uses office vacancy rate in place of retail vacancy rate.⁴⁴ Runyan and Huddleson recognize that the vacancy rates are a sign of poor economic conditions; however, they argue conversely that vacancies may be a positive result of innovation and the risk-taking ability of an active entrepreneurial community.⁴⁵

Runyan and Huddleson consider longevity of businesses (or alternatively turnover rate) as an indicator of success because stores that are in business longer are likely to be financially stable.⁴⁶ DDI uses quantitative criteria for measuring longevity.

A downtown should have less than 5% turnover per year to become successful.⁴⁷ Downtown Idea Exchange mentions the importance of flexible hours of operation for downtown businesses as one of the essentials for success.⁴⁸ DDI uses quantitative criteria for hours of operation where they mention that successful downtowns must have a minimum of 10 businesses open after 6 pm. As one of the 20 ingredients for success, they mention that lease agreements should include defined operating hours and days.⁴⁹

In addition to the total number of businesses, the mix of businesses downtown is identified as a qualitative indicator critical for downtown success. Runyan and Huddleson, Downtown Idea Exchange and DDI recognize the importance of a healthy business mix downtown.⁵⁰ In addition to an operating-hours requirement, DDI requires at least 10 places that sell food and 10 destination retail shops for calling a downtown successful.⁵¹ Gruen lists unique tenancies as one of the ten characteristics of successful downtowns on the basis of her more than 30 years of experience advising downtowns.⁵² Midwest Living provides information about 75

small Midwestern towns that have attractive characteristics for visitors. The information about the cities is accompanied with the mention of unique retail and eating places.⁵³ Filion et al. find in their survey that successful downtowns pursue a niche based retail development.⁵⁴ Ferguson identifies shared attributes of successful downtowns by researching eleven downtowns that have a national reputation for being successful. He finds that the nature of downtown retailing was in flux in great downtowns where food and beverages are replacing traditional retail.⁵⁵ Civilis Consultants present similar finding after studying successful Main Street downtowns. They find that successful downtowns need a solid base of food service.⁵⁶

The strength of retail activity downtown is a popular indicator for measuring success. Authors use business mix, sidewalk activity and increase in daytime population as qualitative indicators. They use vacancy rate (or alternatively occupancy rate), hours of operation and longevity (or alternatively turnover rate) as qualitative indicators to assess the downtown retail success.

3 Downtown Housing

Downtown housing is a relatively new indicator of downtown success and its importance is highlighted by the contemporary literature. Promoting housing downtown is becoming popular among policy makers as it provides a 24-hour customer base to downtown amenities. In the survey of 57 small American cities, Robertson finds adding housing downtown ranked second in the list of future strat-

egies.⁵⁷ Many cities are augmenting downtown housing to target young professionals, singles, childless couples, empty nesters, seniors and those in need of affordable housing. Downtown housing is relatively easy to quantify and variables such as the increase in housing units or increase on residential population are normally used as indicators.

Cities with increasing downtown housing are a

choice for authors studying successful downtowns. Burayidi finds an increasing downtown residential population in the fourteen resilient downtowns.⁵⁸ Ferguson identifies a strong and growing housing market in the eleven successful downtowns.⁵⁹ Similarly, the importance of people living downtown is recognized by DDI, Urban Models Task Force and Downtown Idea Exchange.⁶⁰ A number of cities listed as Main Street success stories and GAMSAs have made deliberate effort to increase downtown residential population. Many towns have practiced adaptive reuse and infill development to create new housing units downtown. For example, Chippewa Falls, WI converted an empty factory to apartments; Sheboygan Falls, WI redeveloped a woolen mill into apartments; and Harrisonburg, VA reutilized old commercial buildings as housing for young professionals.⁶¹

GAMSAs use the number of housing units added over a time period as a quantitative indicator to assess downtown success.⁶² Burayidi requires at least 5% of the city's population residing downtown for calling a downtown resilient. However, the percentage of city population living downtown varies from 0.5% to 22.3% in the fourteen surveyed resilient downtowns.⁶³ Burayidi uses similar variables such as change in downtown population density and change in size of residential population downtown as indicators for measuring downtown (re) development in the assessment of five small Wisconsin Communities.⁶⁴

Providing more resolution to downtown housing as a success indicator, a few authors have focused on high density residential development, characteristics of neighborhoods surrounding downtown, devotion of public resources to downtown housing and housing affordability. Robertson and Filion et al. find high density residential development important for a successful downtown.⁶⁵ Gruen mentions that successful downtowns have market rate

Figure 3: Downtown Housing Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's population residing downtown
- Increase in downtown housing units over a time period

Qualitative

- High density residential development
- Surrounding market rate residential neighborhoods
- Regulatory framework supporting downtown housing

housing in surrounding neighborhoods whereas less successful downtowns primarily have subsidized units located in the proximity of downtown.⁶⁶ Moulton relies on Denver's experience to illustrate ten steps to create a viable residential downtown. She mentions circumscribing the downtown with viable residential neighborhoods rather than vacant land and parking lots. She highly recommends channelizing city's regulatory and financial resources toward downtown housing to create successful downtown. She notices hindrances such as obsolete density restrictions, fire codes and zoning codes in the promotion of downtown housing.⁶⁷

Money magazine publishes a list of 50 best small towns in America to live. The magazine includes places with the optimal combination of economic strength, job growth, affordability, good schools, diversity, health care and a strong sense of community. The magazine uses a screening process that involves housing appreciation and affordability as one of the filters.⁶⁸ The need for affordable down-

town housing is identified by Ferguson and Moulton.⁶⁹

Downtown housing is a relatively new but prevalent indicator of downtown success. Increased number of downtown housing units and downtown residential population are used as quantitative in-

dicators to assess successful downtown. However, characteristics of surrounding neighborhoods, density of residential development, housing affordability and a progressive regulatory frameworks supporting downtown housing are used as qualitative indicators for defining success.

4 Organization and Partnerships

The implementation of a downtown revitalization scheme is contingent on active leadership and organizational support. A downtown redevelopment plan requires different stakeholders to come together for a shared long term vision. It requires an institutional framework that can facilitate active partnerships and coordination among public, private and non-profit sectors. The literature on successful downtown redevelopment schemes recognizes the value of institutional frameworks for implementation. Along with setting the budgetary priorities, civic leaders shape the value of the community. In response, downtown is beloved by the community.

Downtowns with active leadership, organizational support, partnerships and redevelopment plans are prioritized by authors studying successful downtowns. Burayidi notes prominent civic leaders in the surveyed resilient downtowns who significantly contribute to reversing the downtown decline. These leaders take advocacy roles rallying public support for downtown revitalization. As a consequence, Burayidi requires strong support for downtown development by civic leaders in the downtown resilience scorecard.⁷⁰

In addition to the civic leadership, Burayidi recognizes the role of a downtown development organization whose sole purpose is to facilitate implementation of revitalization strategies and fostering partnerships among different stakeholders. He requires a dedicated downtown development authority to provide an institutional framework to implement downtown programs for calling a downtown resilient. Moreover, he mentions that the downtown development authority may adhere to four models. These are: i) the business improvement district (BID) organizational model; ii) a separate BID organization and a downtown development authority (DDA) model; iii) an independent downtown development authority that arrogates the functions of the BID organization; and iv) the city agency model of downtown development.⁷¹ Similarly, Ferguson also finds various organizational models existing in surveyed successful downtowns. However, he mentions that despite the nature of the organizational model, successful downtowns are capable of delivering downtown services.⁷² Burayidi notes the efforts toward downtown organization in the assessment of five small Wisconsin communities.⁷³ Filion et al. notice the need of durable political support and stable downtown alliances to maintain the in-

terest of the municipal government in downtown revitalization.⁷⁴

A successful downtown utilizes different forms of partnerships and coalitions. Partnerships between local government and downtown development organizations and public-private partnerships are two commonly recognized forms of coalitions identified in the literature surveying successful downtowns. Robertson finds a lack of public-private partnerships in declining downtowns.⁷⁵ Robertson lists public-private partnerships as one of the seven downtown development principles for small cities.⁷⁶ Ferguson notices a strong presence of the public sector in the future projects downtown.⁷⁷ The importance of the public-private partnership is also highlighted by the Urban Models Task Force, Downtown Idea Exchange, DDI and Civilis Consultants.⁷⁸ Fillion et al. find a varying level of public sector presence in downtown redevelopment in their interviews. However, their survey recognizes public sector presence as an important attribute of the successful downtowns.⁷⁹

Ferguson and Moulton mention that successful downtowns overcome the inevitable challenges and obstacles such as economic cycle wanes and real estate market shifts.⁸⁰ Organizational support is one of the four approaches followed by the Main Street communities. Therefore, the successful downtowns listed in the Main Street success stories and GAMSAs have made efforts to strengthen organizations and partnerships among different stakeholders including, local government and the private sector. For example, Beaufort, SC contracted with the city to provide downtown services; Lynchburg, VA developed public-private alliances to mobilize riverfront projects; and Natchitoches, LA partnered with tourism, preservation and economic development organizations to achieve redevelopment goals.⁸¹

One frequent outcome of strong organizational sup-

Figure 4: Organization and Partnership Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Active leadership
- Downtown development authority (or organizational support)
- Partnerships and coalitions
- Downtown redevelopment plan
- Community involvement (or affection from citizenry)

port is a shared downtown vision and a concrete redevelopment plan. DDI and Downtown Idea Exchange mention working on a downtown redevelopment plan as one of the attributes of successful downtowns.⁸² Robertson lists developing a vision/plan for downtown as one of the seven downtown development principles for small cities.⁸³ The Urban Models Task Force highlights the role of public participation in creating downtown revitalization plans in successful downtowns.⁸⁴

The cohesive force of organizing and partnering downtown stakeholders also includes citizenry. Active leadership, organizational support and redevelopment ideas for the downtown are ineffective without the support of both business owners and customers. The affection of business owners and residents is also used as an indicator of downtown success because it is an integral part of accomplishing redevelopment goals. Ferguson and DDI find that successful downtowns are beloved by their citizenry.⁸⁵ APA publishes a yearly list of great neighborhoods. APA's consider-

ation of neighborhoods is not only limited to downtowns but spans to other urban, suburban, exurban, town and small village neighborhoods. Strong community involvement in downtown activities is one of the requirements for neighborhoods to be designated as great.⁸⁶ Money magazine interviews residents to assess community spirit before including a city in the livability ranking.⁸⁷ A number of towns recognized by the Main Street success stories and GAMSA mention total number of volunteers or volunteer hours as an important measure. . For example, Sigourney, IA harnessed nearly 22,000 volunteer hours and Old Town Lansing, MI has around 1,300 volunteers.⁸⁸

Runyan and Huddleson argue that the downtown business owners can best provide an accurate as-

essment of the success level of the respective downtown. They mention a positive business climate as an indicator for a successful downtown.⁸⁹ Tyler's research with 16 Michigan downtowns rests on the assumption that local business owners can tell the health of a downtown.⁹⁰

Organization and partnerships are popular qualitative indicators for downtown success. Although the literature studying attributes of successful downtowns does not provide any method to quantify these variables, it realizes the importance of active leadership, organizational support, partnerships, redevelopment vision and community involvement. Therefore, the presence of these qualitative attributes partly defines successful downtowns.

5

Downtown Traffic Generators

The historical development of downtowns bestows on many of them a number of assets. These assets may include having a university, being close to natural amenities and housing civic and cultural uses. In successful downtowns, these assets set them advantageously apart from the unsuccessful ones. However, Filion et al. conclude that it is a fact that many successful downtowns are blessed with assets but a closer examination reveals the community's extensive effort to capitalize on these assets. They encounter a number of unsuccessful downtowns with similar assets lying underutilized.⁹¹ Nonetheless, the presence of downtown assets provides the possibility to extract more benefit from it. In addition to the existing assets, many downtowns develop large scale projects and amenities to attract peo-

ple downtown. These downtown traffic generators are found in different forms and they are invaluable in making a downtown successful. Consequently, downtown assets and amenities are mentioned as an indicator of success by a number of authors.

The presence of downtown assets and amenities can either be organic or manmade. For example, proximity to a waterfront or being a county seat is an organic asset but developing a sports stadium or a university downtown is a manmade asset. However, the purpose of both sets of assets is to generate traffic downtown. Robertson and the Urban Models Task Force mention that successful downtowns build on their assets.⁹²

The presence and restoration of natural amenities downtown and being a venue of political significance such as county seat is used as a qualitative indicator to estimate downtown success. Crampton identifies 100 best small towns in America using a seven fold quantitative filter. He finds that 80% of the towns on the list are county seats.⁹³ Similarly, Filion et al. find almost 5 state capitals in the 19 identified successful downtowns. They also find that nearly all downtowns are in proximity with the waterfronts that are being redeveloped to attract visitors.⁹⁴ APA and Crampton look for a natural setting before ranking a place.⁹⁵ Robertson mentions waterfront development as a key principle for making a downtown successful.⁹⁶ The Urban Models Task Force presents examples of Chattanooga Riverpark, Historic Arkansas River – Pueblo CO, River Place – Portland OR to illustrate the contribution of waterfront development in downtown success.⁹⁷ Crampton gives advantage to towns that are less than 40 miles away from a metropolitan area while selecting the 100 best towns.⁹⁸

Authors studying successful downtowns identify the clustering of manmade traffic generators such as educational establishments, entertainment venues, civic amenities, sports venues and public markets downtown as an indicator of downtown vibrancy. Filion et al. identify proximity to a university and presence of cultural activities such as art galleries as common attributes of successful downtowns.⁹⁹ Robertson mentions success of large scale projects such as convention centers, sports stadiums, and skyscraper office buildings. Robertson criticizes sports stadiums and convention centers due to underutilization along with mentioning their spillover benefits on downtown retail and restaurants.¹⁰⁰ Ferguson identifies multiple traffic generators in the eleven surveyed downtowns. These downtowns frequently had college or university, theaters, museums, sports venues and performing art centers.¹⁰¹

Figure 5: Downtown Traffic Generator Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's civic and cultural uses located downtown

Qualitative

- Access to natural amenities (or waterfront development)
- Arts and entertainment amenities
- Educational establishments
- Civic buildings
- Sports stadiums and convention centers

Money magazine and Crampton notice a high presence of educational establishments in the towns they selected as best places to live.¹⁰²

Strom studies the symbiotic relationship between the cultural institutions and the downtowns. In a survey of 65 American cities, she identifies 71 major performing art centers and museums that have been built or substantially expanded since 1985.¹⁰³ Burayidi argues that the civic and cultural amenities downtown are becoming more vulnerable to urban growth. Burayidi notices the retention of the civic and cultural amenities downtown in the surveyed resilient downtowns. He requires more than half of all the civic and cultural facilities in the city to be located downtown and in near downtown neighborhoods to call a downtown resilient.¹⁰⁴ The importance of such traffic generators is also recognized by Moulton, DDI, the Urban Models Task Force, Downtown Idea Exchange, Money Magazine, and Midwest Living.¹⁰⁵

Several communities listed in the Main Street success stories and GAMSA made efforts to promote arts and entertainment downtown. For example, Washington, MO renovated an old standing structure for an “Artist in Residence” program and Manassas, VA converted an old candy factory to an art center. These successful Main Street downtowns made deliberate efforts to retain civic and cultural amenities downtown. For example, Albany, OR lobbied to retain the city hall downtown; Frankfort, IN lobbied to locate a new jail downtown and Staunton, VA converted an old department store into city hall.¹⁰⁶

The possession of traffic generators as assets is an

indicator of success of a downtown. These assets, when utilized properly, attract more visitors downtown lending spillover benefits to the overall economic performance of downtown. The presence of the traffic generators can be serendipitous or deliberate. The proximity to natural amenities and designation as a county seat are used as qualitative indicators to assess downtown success resulting due to organic traffic generators. The presence of universities, sports stadiums, performing art centers, convention centers, movie theaters, civic buildings and museums is taken as an indicator to assess downtown success resulting due to manmade traffic generators.

6

Preservation and Rehabilitation

The major reason behind much downtown decline was the relocation of retail from the city core to the fringes. In response, the successful revitalization efforts focus on the accentuation of a distinct core area identity that cannot be replicated in suburbs. A downtown possesses old commercial structures that are not found anywhere else in the city. Successful downtowns use historic preservation not only to define the character of the community but to also encourage heritage tourism downtown. Although many large city downtowns have undergone urban renewal that destroyed much of the historical built environment, many successful small city downtowns have recognized, preserved and shared their built heritage.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, the efforts taken toward historic preservation and re-

habilitation are used as an indicator for estimating downtown success.

Burayidi finds successful preservation of heritage resources in the fourteen resilient downtowns. He witnesses historic preservation ordinances in these resilient downtowns with varying degree of strictness. In the downtown resilience scorecard, Burayidi requires at least one-tenth of the designated historic property on the National Register of Historic Places to be located downtown. However, the percentage of registered historic structures downtown varies from 10% to 67% in these fourteen resilient downtowns.¹⁰⁸ Filion et al. find tourist activities, distinctive architecture and historical character as important successful downtown attributes in their survey. The successful downtowns, identified by

Filion et al., are utilizing their historical character to promote tourism. They use number of hotel/motel rooms per 1,000 central city residents as a proxy quantitative indicator to measure tourism activity.¹⁰⁹ In the survey conducted by Roberson, 24 of 57 participating small city downtowns mention historic preservation as their strongest asset and 50 of 57 small city downtowns mention using preservation as a downtown development strategy.¹¹⁰ He lists taking advantage of downtown heritage as one of the seven downtown development principles for small cities.¹¹¹

APA requires a neighborhood to have local history and distinctive architecture for buildings to be designated as great.¹¹² Rypkema depicts the downtown buildings as symbols of the community identity. In her research related to assessing importance of downtowns in the 21st century, she encourages economic globalization for downtowns while maintaining their unique character through preservation.¹¹³ The importance of historic preservation for a successful downtown is also highlighted by the Urban Models Task Force and Downtown Idea Exchange.¹¹⁴

In addition to preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse are identified as important for a successful downtown. Robertson documents the use of adaptive reuse in utilizing old railroad terminals and warehouses as festive market places.¹¹⁵ Moulton mentions the adaptive reuse of old buildings in promoting downtown living.¹¹⁶ Many successful downtowns listed in the Main Street success stories and GAMSAs have executed successful preservation and rehabilitation projects. For example, H Street, Washington DC made efforts to preserve old African-American neighborhoods; El Dorado, AR successfully got

Figure 6: Preservation and Rehabilitation Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's registered historic structures located downtown
- Number of hotel/motel rooms per 1,000 central city residents

Qualitative

- Rehabilitation projects
- Historic preservation initiatives
- Heritage tourism

fourteen structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places; Americus, GA redeveloped their landmark hotel as a downtown centerpiece; and Fort Pierce, FL renovated the historic city hall and the theatre downtown.¹¹⁷

Historic preservation and rehabilitation help downtowns to enhance their uniqueness and create identity over other places in the city. It also drives downtown heritage tourism. Hence, the extent of preservation and rehabilitation practice is used as an indicator to assess downtown success. Authors use number of hotel/motel rooms per 1,000 central city residents and proportion of registered historic places as quantitative indicators to assess downtown success. They use successfully accomplished preservation and rehabilitation projects as qualitative indicators to define downtown success.

Immigration and diversity are new indicators used for estimating downtown success. These measures are reflections of a community's openness. A diverse population includes non-traditional families, LGBT, handicapped, various races and ethnicities, as well as immigrants. The recent focus on immigration is an outcome of a nationally shifting trend of immigrants settling in small cities.¹¹⁸ A community's ability to embrace diversity shows its welcoming nature for new ideas and perspective.

Burayidi argues that new immigrants can boost the population and bring vitality to cities experiencing population loss. New immigrants become homeowners, help stabilize neighborhoods, and start new businesses that help grow local economies. Restaurants, custodial services, retail establishments, and professional business services such as accounting, design and high technology firms are started by new immigrants. Burayidi uses both qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess a community's openness. In the downtown resilience scorecard, Burayidi requires civic leaders to be welcoming to immigrants and at least 2% of city's population to be foreign born. However, the percentage of foreign born population in the fourteen resilient cities ranges from 2.3% to 25.1%.¹¹⁹

Crampton looks for places that reflect racial diversity to designate them as best places to live. However, he cautions that many towns listed in the top 100 places to live do not represent a diverse population in comparison to the national averages of non-white population.¹²⁰ Money magazine uses quantitative criteria to select best places to live. It excludes places that have more than 95% popula-

tion of one race.¹²¹ Rypkema argues differentiation to be the greatest strength of downtowns. She highly recommends downtowns to figure out ways to operate in the new context of diversity for economic survival.¹²² Filion et al. quote Florida's creative class theory as they find a high presence of creative class in the successful downtowns.¹²³ Ferguson notices a substantial presence of ethnic restaurants in successful downtowns.¹²⁴

A number of towns listed in the Main Street success stories and GAMSAs have made efforts to incorporate immigration and diversity in their downtown revitalization strategy. For example, Watsonville, CA targeted regional Latino populations for economic development and H Street, Washington DC especially supported African-American entrepreneurs.¹²⁵

Immigration and diversity are new indicators measuring downtown success. They reflect community's openness toward socioeconomic changes and

Figure 7: Immigration and Diversity Indicators

Quantitative

- Percentage of foreign born population in the city
- Percentage of non-white population in the city

Qualitative

- Civic leaders' attitude toward diverse population

entrepreneurial activities. Authors use the percentage of foreign born population and the percentage of non-white population as quantitative indicators

and a community's attitude toward diversity as qualitative indicator.

Multifunctionality

Historically, the primary function of downtowns has been shopping, services and employment. As many downtowns witness a decline in retail, it is essential for downtowns to develop themselves as a more diversified economy. Successful downtowns are multifunctional; hence, multifunctionality is seen as an indicator of downtown success. They are not dependent only on retail for economic gains. A multifunctional downtown offers a variety of activities that serve to bring people downtown for different reasons at varied times of day and week. A number of downtowns have focused their downtown revitalization strategies on multifunctionality.

Downtowns, equipped with a variety of land uses, are popular among authors studying successful downtowns. Burayidi notices a balance of different land uses in the fourteen surveyed resilient downtowns. For example, Chico, CA vertically redeveloped several buildings into mixed use buildings and Greenville, SC epitomizes an ideal mix of residential, commercial, civic and cultural uses.¹²⁶ Robertson finds a lack in the variety of land uses in 9 of 10 survey cities with declining vitality.¹²⁷ He recommends multifunctionality as one of the seven downtown development principles for small towns.¹²⁸ Ferguson identified that successful downtowns have a commitment to mixed use development. These downtowns share an affinity toward mixed use development for new development.¹²⁹ APA, Rypkema and the Urban Models Task Force also recognize importance of multifunctionality for downtown success.¹³⁰

The literature reviewing revitalization efforts documents several successful cases where the downtowns have especially focused on office and conference meeting space to become multifunctional. Robertson identifies 44 of 57 surveyed cities following new office development as a downtown development strategy. This strategy was second after Main Street's four-point approach in the success ratings for small city downtown development strategies.¹³¹ Robertson mentions office development

Figure 8: Multifunctionality Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Mixed use development
- Office development
- Conference/meeting space

as a popular strategy for downtowns following a corporate center approach.¹³² Abbott notices substantial increase in the office space for downtowns striving to tap into the global service economy.¹³³ Gruen lists the necessity of primary conference/meeting space located downtown to become successful downtown.¹³⁴

Multifunctionality enables downtowns to attract a variety of population at a variety of times. Multifunctionality is a traditional method of revitalization. Authors use mixed use development, increase in office space and conference/meeting space as qualitative indicators to assess multifunctionality in a downtown.

9

Downtown Design

A downtown with quality built environment is more patronized by the residents in comparison to a poorly managed urban space. The street level activity, retail, civic and cultural uses downtown are complemented by the design elements that help in attracting and retaining the foot traffic. Successful downtowns pay extreme attention to design details making the urban core more inviting and convenient for visitors. A downtown cannot economically succeed when it is not attracting residents for reasons such as meeting friends, taking a walk, relaxing in a coffee shop or holding communal events. These activities catalyzed with thoughtful urban design create a positive image of downtown providing a unique edge over suburban shopping centers. For these reasons, downtown design is treated as a success indicator.

Downtowns experience retail competition from suburban malls. Suburban shopping centers are automobile orientated; however, the design in successful downtowns works inversely. It focuses on providing pedestrian friendly environments where people can gather for multiple purposes. Downtown design guidelines amplify elegant building facades and streetscape. Authors find sense of place, de-

sign guidelines, pedestrian friendly environments, streetscape improvements, clear boundaries, clear entrances, accessibility, parking and cleanliness as design attributes of successful downtowns. These attributes are not mutually exclusive but in many cases complement each other.

A sense of place is a cumulative expression of downtown design quality. Successful downtowns establish a distinctive and positive sense of place. Robertson notes a negative sense of place in all 10 surveyed cities with declining downtowns.¹³⁵ APA requires great neighborhoods to have memorable character and unique visual experiences.¹³⁶ Runyan and Huddleson mandate a sense of place as an essential attribute for a successful downtown. They define sense of place as comprised of safe, walkable and historically preserved dimensions.¹³⁷ The Urban Models Task force also recognizes the importance of sense of place to successful downtowns.¹³⁸

A successful downtown is discernable as it has a clear boundary and clear entrances. However, the sense of downtown entrance and boundary can be perceptual. Burayidi notices that resilient down-

towns having clear boundaries and entrances.¹³⁹ Moulton and APA mention a clear boundary as an important attribute of successful downtown.¹⁴⁰ DDI lists notable entrances to both the downtown and the community as ingredients for success.¹⁴¹ A good example is Woodbine, IA, a GAMSA winner, which restored brick streets to define a clear boundary for their downtown.¹⁴²

The downtown design guidelines provide standards and procedures to ensure that new development is in line with the community's history, culture and heritage. These guidelines provide the public sector, property owners and developers with direction on how to remodel, preserve or pursue new construction downtown. Burayidi requires a city to have design guidelines for downtown before calling it resilient in the downtown resilience scorecard.¹⁴³ Robertson lists establishing and enforcing design guidelines as one of the seven downtown development principles for small cities.¹⁴⁴ DDI mentions signage rules and regulations as one of the twenty ingredients of successful downtowns.¹⁴⁵ Civilis consultants require guidelines for space size and finish for successful downtowns.¹⁴⁶

The downtowns with bike/pedestrian friendliness are desirable. People incline more toward a safe walkable space that is easy to navigate. Burayidi requires a downtown to be designed for pedestrian convenience and wayfinding in the downtown resilience scorecard.¹⁴⁷ Robertson identifies downtown pedestrianization as one the most successful principles for small city downtown development.¹⁴⁸ Ferguson finds walkability as a common attribute among the surveyed successful downtowns.¹⁴⁹ A number of downtowns have developed pedestrian malls to make the downtown more attractive for walking.¹⁵⁰ Filion et al. notices that 6 of 19 successful downtowns have a pedestrian mall.¹⁵¹ DDI lists installation of a wayfinding system as one of the twenty ingredients of successful downtowns.¹⁵² The importance of bike/pedestrian friendliness is also recognized by APA, the

Figure 9: Downtown Design Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Sense of place
- Clear boundary
- Clear entrance
- Design guidelines
- Bike/pedestrian friendliness
- Public space
- Streetscape and façade improvement programs
- Accessibility and connectivity

Urban Models Task Force and Civilis Consultants.¹⁵³

A formal or informal public space downtown allows residents to gather and to hold communal events. Burayidi finds similar public spaces in resilient downtowns. In the downtown resilience scorecard, Burayidi requires a downtown to offer a highly patronized communal gathering space.¹⁵⁴ DDI lists public plazas as one of the twenty ingredients for successful downtowns.¹⁵⁵ The importance of public space downtown is also highlighted by the Urban Models Task Force and Civilis Consultants.¹⁵⁶ Dane mentions the example of Nappanee, IN in the Main Street success stories as it created a gathering place downtown.¹⁵⁷

Successful downtowns make continuous effort to beautify both the streetscape and facades. Filion et al. notices operationalized streetscape and façade im-

provement programs in successful downtowns.¹⁵⁸ Successful downtowns listed in the Main Street success stories and GAMSA have utilized streetscape improvement programs. For example, Rochester, MI installed new streetlights, sidewalks and streetscape amenities as part of a streetscape improvement program and Danville, KY enhanced downtown aesthetics with \$500,000 streetscape improvement project.¹⁵⁹ DDI notices successful downtowns investing in downtown beautification.¹⁶⁰ However, Tyler offers certain caveats for using streetscape as an indicator of downtown health. In his research, streetscape did not statistically correlate to the Health Perception Index (HPI).¹⁶¹ Moulton and Dane highlight the importance of cleanliness for the successful downtown.¹⁶² For example, Berkeley, CA countered graffiti and debris to make the downtown clean and attractive.¹⁶³

Successful downtowns are accessible and connected. They work on improving their accessibility from different modes of transportation and connecting themselves to other parts of the city and the region. Burayidi finds resilient downtowns accessible through different modes of transportation.¹⁶⁴ Robertson identifies transit and transportation improvements augmenting other revitalization strategies in five downtowns he interviewed. He identifies traffic circulation changes and transit improvements to be practiced in 37 of 57 surveyed cities.¹⁶⁵ Although satiating parking needs is a long practiced downtown

revitalization strategy, Robertson recommends not overemphasizing the importance of parking.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, parking does not statistically correlate to the Health Perception Index (HPI) in Tyler's research on sixteen Michigan downtowns.¹⁶⁷ Filion et al. find the practice of traffic calming measures such as occasionally banning parking lots as one of the attributes of successful downtowns.¹⁶⁸ The importance of accessibility and connectivity in creating successful downtowns is also recognized by the Urban Models Task Force, APA, Gruen, Moulton, Civilis Consultants and DDI.¹⁶⁹ A number of cities recognized in the Main Street success stories and GAMSA have tried to improve downtown accessibility and connectivity. For example, La Crosse, WI linked its riverwalk and recreational boat docking facility downtown to the state recreational trail system; Albany, OR instituted a parking management program; and Americus, GA regulated the business and employee parking downtown.¹⁷⁰

Downtown design improves the built environment by attracting more foot traffic. A poorly designed downtown is less patronized by the residents. Authors use a number of qualitative variables to assess successful downtown design including, sense of place, clear boundaries, clear entrances, design guidelines, bike/pedestrian friendliness, public spaces, streetscape and façade improvement programs, and accessibility and connectivity.

The impact of downtown revitalization strategies doesn't automatically reach a larger audience. Branding, promotion and marketing schemes are often part of the revitalization strategy to disseminate information about the downtown programs in order to increase the number of patrons. Successful downtowns utilize innovative and effective branding and promotion initiatives to attract more population downtown. Recent literature on downtown revitalization recognizes branding and promotion as an indicator of success for downtowns.

Successful downtowns use programs, events, social media and public outreach to promote themselves. In many cases, promotion and organization go in tandem. Filion et al. find successful downtowns making efforts to improve downtown visibility through marketing and event programming.¹⁷¹ Burayidi notices special events downtown to attract pedestrian traffic in his research of five small Wisconsin communities.¹⁷² Civilis Consultants mention the role of promotion in creating identity and attracting traffic downtown.¹⁷³ Runyan and

Huddleson mention the role of branding and creation of community identity for successful downtown.¹⁷⁴ DDI notices successful downtowns having a unique and familiar name for promotion.¹⁷⁵

Promotion is one of core strategies of the Main Street four-point approach. Consequently, Main Street downtowns mentioned in success stories and recognized as award winners have made deliberate branding and promotion efforts. For example, Burlington, IA launched a major cycling race downtown; Livermore, CA organizes a wine festival attracting 150,000 visitors; and Westfield, NJ circulates "Talk of the Town," a newsletter covering downtown happenings, and a "Shopping Directory" to assist customers.¹⁷⁶

Successful downtowns use branding and promotion to let the residents and tourists know more about the revitalization efforts and special programs. Authors use downtown events and promotion schemes as qualitative indicators to assess success of a downtown.

Figure 10: Branding and Promotion Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Special events
- Marketing initiatives

11

Downtown Finance, Employment and Demographics

Successful downtowns reflect high standards in financial performance, employment, safety, and environmental sustainability. Even the demographics of the city such as population mix, education and availability of healthcare are often a reflection of a successful downtown. Authors use a variety of indicators to assess downtown finance and demographic success including, income, employment, property value, population mix, education, healthcare accessibility, safety and the environment.

The real estate properties in the successful downtowns have high economic demand. Burayidi notices an increase in the assessed values of properties in resilient downtowns.¹⁷⁷ He uses the change in assessed value of property and the change in real property investment as quantitative indicators for measuring downtown (re)development.¹⁷⁸ Dane uses the percentage increase in the rental value for downtown properties to assess the success of Main Street programs. For successful Main Street downtowns, she notices an average 93% increase in the rental values over an average period of ten years.¹⁷⁹ DDI requires the lease rate to be “market rate” or higher compared to the peer cities for successful downtowns.¹⁸⁰

Successful downtowns attract high income residents and have high employment levels. Burayidi finds that resilient downtowns attract high income residents downtown.¹⁸¹ Tyler finds household income to be correlated to Health Perception Index (HPI) in his study of the sixteen Michigan towns.¹⁸² Crampton uses per capita income as a quantitative indicator to select the best small towns in America.¹⁸³ Money magazine does not include places in

ranking that have median income more than 200% or less than 85% of the state average.¹⁸⁴

Filion et al. notice employment in their survey as an important factor for downtown success.¹⁸⁵ Gruen mentions that successful downtowns have a high proportion of the downtown labor force in private sector.¹⁸⁶ Burayidi uses change in downtown employment by sector as a quantitative indicator to measure downtown (re)development.¹⁸⁷ Successful Main Street downtowns have also noticed new jobs downtown. For example, Burlington, IA cre-

Figure 11: Downtown Finance, Employment and Demographic Indicators

Quantitative

- Change in assessed value of property
- Change in real property investment
- Change in downtown employment by sector
- Percentage increase in rental value
- Lease rate comparison with peer cities
- Income of downtown residents
- Crime known to police per 1000 residents

Qualitative

- Make up of downtown labor force
- Environmental sustainability

ated 441 new jobs and Paso Robles, CA 508 new jobs though new businesses.¹⁸⁸ Money magazine doesn't consider places with major job loss in the ranking for the best towns.¹⁸⁹

Authors use population age cohorts and education attainment as quantitative criteria to list towns as the best places to live. Crampton uses proportion of population in the 25 to 34 year age group and percentage of local population with a four year college education or more as quantitative indicators to select the best small towns in America.¹⁹⁰ Money magazine does not consider retirement communities and communities with poor education level as best places to live.¹⁹¹

Authors use a variety of indicators to define downtown success. These indicators define both traditional and contemporary perceptions of success. Traditional indicators show success in retail and finance; however, more recent indicators focus on immigration, design, housing, organization and promotion.

The number of businesses located downtown offers a measure of the retail activity downtown. The extent of street level activity downtown is an indicator of downtown success. People living in downtowns provide a 24 hour customer base to downtown services. So, the number of housing units and population living downtown show the condition of downtown housing. The organizational support and partnerships with public, private and non-profit sectors are indicators of a downtown's ability to implement revitalization policies. Successful downtowns have the majority of their civic and cultural uses downtown generating foot traffic. Consequently, the presence of such downtown traf-

Successful downtowns have made efforts to mitigate the crime downtown. The importance of safety for a successful downtown is recognized by Moulton, Gruen, Urban Models Task Force, APA and Money magazine.¹⁹² Crampton uses crimes known to police per 1000 residents as a quantitative indicator to select the best small towns in America. To assess healthcare, he uses number of physicians per 1000 people as a proxy indicator.¹⁹³ APA requires a neighborhood to be environmentally sustainable to be designated as a great neighborhood. APA requires the neighborhood to promote air quality, green infrastructure and manage storm water runoff.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion

fic generators is an indicator of downtown success.

Successful downtowns are preserving their heritage to create identity and promote tourism. They are creating policies to welcome immigrants to tap into their economic resources. Hence, the extent of historic preservation and immigration is an indicator of downtown success. Successful downtowns are diversified economies. So multifunctionality is also an indicator of downtown success. Successful downtowns are working on improving the quality of the built environment by paying special attention to urban design.

These indicators all help to identify successful downtowns and will assist in the creation of a searchable database of successful communities. This research will assist economic development educators and local business development leaders to better develop and promote economic development and revitalization efforts in their respective downtowns.

Downtown Retail Development Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of all retail businesses located downtown
- Increase in retail businesses downtown over a time period
- Occupancy rate (or drop in vacancy rate)
- Longevity of businesses (or turnover rate)

Qualitative

- Retail activity
- Daytime population
- Business mix
- Flux in downtown businesses

Downtown Housing Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's population residing downtown
- Increase in downtown housing units over a time period

Qualitative

- High density residential development
- Surrounding market rate residential neighborhoods
- Regulatory framework supporting downtown housing

Organization and Partnership Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Active leadership
- Downtown development authority (or organizational support)
- Partnerships and coalitions
- Downtown redevelopment plan
- Community involvement (or affection from citizenry)

Downtown Traffic Generator Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's civic and cultural uses located downtown

Qualitative

- Access to natural amenities (or waterfront development)
- Arts and entertainment amenities
- Educational establishments
- Civic buildings
- Sports stadiums and convention centers

Preservation and Rehabilitation Indicators

Quantitative

- Proportion of city's registered historic structures located downtown
- Number of hotel/motel rooms per 1,000 central city residents

Qualitative

- Rehabilitation projects
- Historic preservation initiatives
- Heritage tourism

Immigration and Diversity Indicators

Quantitative

- Percentage of foreign born population in the city
- Percentage of non-white population in the city

Qualitative

- Civic leaders' attitude toward diverse population

Multifunctionality Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Mixed use development
- Office development
- Conference/meeting space

Downtown Design Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Sense of place
- Clear boundary
- Clear entrance
- Design guidelines
- Bike/pedestrian friendliness
- Public space
- Streetscape and façade improvement programs
- Accessibility and connectivity

Branding and Promotion Indicators

Quantitative

Qualitative

- Special events
- Marketing initiatives

Downtown Finance, Employment and Demographic Indicators

Quantitative

- Change in assessed value of property
- Change in real property investment
- Change in downtown employment by sector
- Percentage increase in rental value
- Lease rate comparison with peer cities
- Income of downtown residents
- Crime known to police per 1000 residents

Qualitative

- Make up of downtown labor force
- Environmental sustainability

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