

Downtown Austin Alliance

# **Perceptions of Downtown Austin and the Downtown Austin Alliance**

## **Highlights of the Biannual Tracking Survey Report**

**Presented to Austin City Council  
December 6, 2007**

**Late Backup**

**M. CRANE & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

## Objectives

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- To monitor key stakeholders' perceptions of **Downtown Austin**, including:
  - » Perceived strengths
  - » Perceived weaknesses
  - » Recommended changes
- To monitor awareness of **the DAA** and its programs and communications, and to assess overall effectiveness.
- To identify important trends and **changes over time**.
- To inform the DAA's **priorities and new directions for the future**.

## Research Methodology

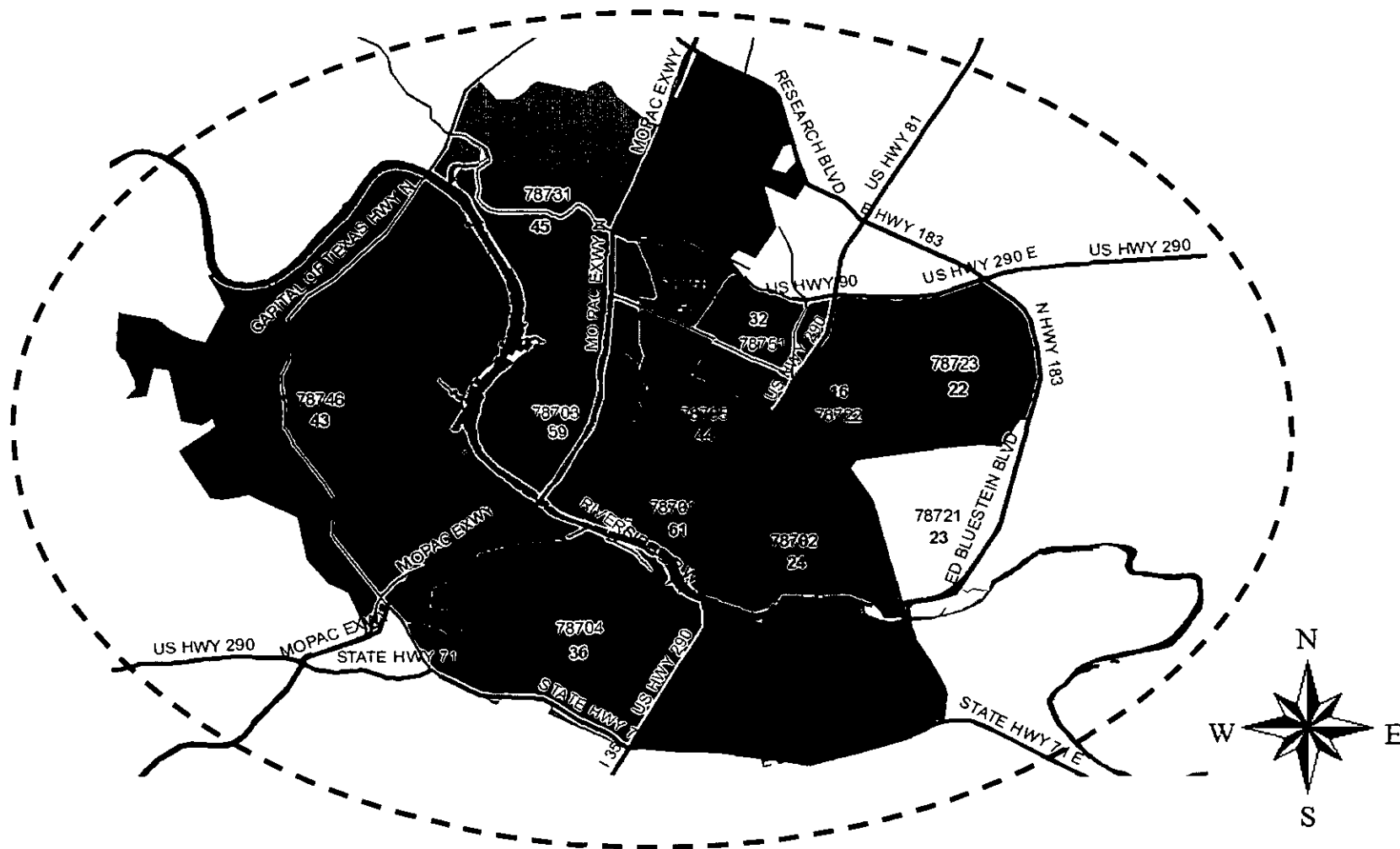
- The DAA has conducted tracking surveys of downtown stakeholders biannually since 1995
- In 2007, 550 telephone interviews were conducted between August 1 and August 10 with four stakeholder groups:

SEGMENT	SAMPLING
100 Downtown Property Owners and Managers (Prop O&Ms) 100 Downtown Business Owners and Managers (Bus O&Ms)	Sampled from a comprehensive list of downtown property/business owners provided by the DAA
100 Downtown Employees (Emps) 250 Other Nearby Residents (NBRs)	Sampled from a Random Digit Dial (RDD) list of households in the 14 most proximate zip codes

- Interviews averaged 22 minutes in length for Prop and Bus O&Ms and 16 minutes in length for Emps and NBRs.

Note In the tables that follow, the NBR category is comprised of 100 respondents who live nearby and work Downtown (and are described separately as Emps) and 250 respondents who live nearby but do not work Downtown

## Nearby Residents



## **Overall Evaluation of Downtown**

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- **VERY FAVORABLE**

All four groups evaluate Downtown Austin favorably on every dimension measured.

- **QUITE CONSISTENT**

Over the last several years, there has been very little variation in the evaluation of downtown, across all four segments and all measures.

# Overall Evaluation of Downtown

	2005	2007			
	Overall Mean	Prop O&Ms n=100	Bus O&Ms n=100	Emps n=100	NBRs n=350
Commute to Downtown	8 8	8 7	8 9	8 9	8 8
Safety during the day	8 7	8 7	8 7	8 7	8 7
Interesting places and things	8 4	8 4	8 1	8 4	8 4
Getting Around Downtown	8 3	8 4	8 2	8 3	8 2
Cleanliness of streets and buildings	8 4	8 2	8 5	8 1	8 3
Visual appeal	8 1	8 2	8 0	8 2	8 1
Desirable place to shop	8 0	7 9	8 2	7 9	8 1
Desirable place to work	7 9	7 8	8 2	7 8	7 8
Safety during the night	7 6	7 8	7 6	7 4	7 5
Desirable place to live	7 6	7 4	8 2	7 6	7 6

## **Perceived Changes to Downtown**

Getting Better All the Time . . .

**EXCEPT**

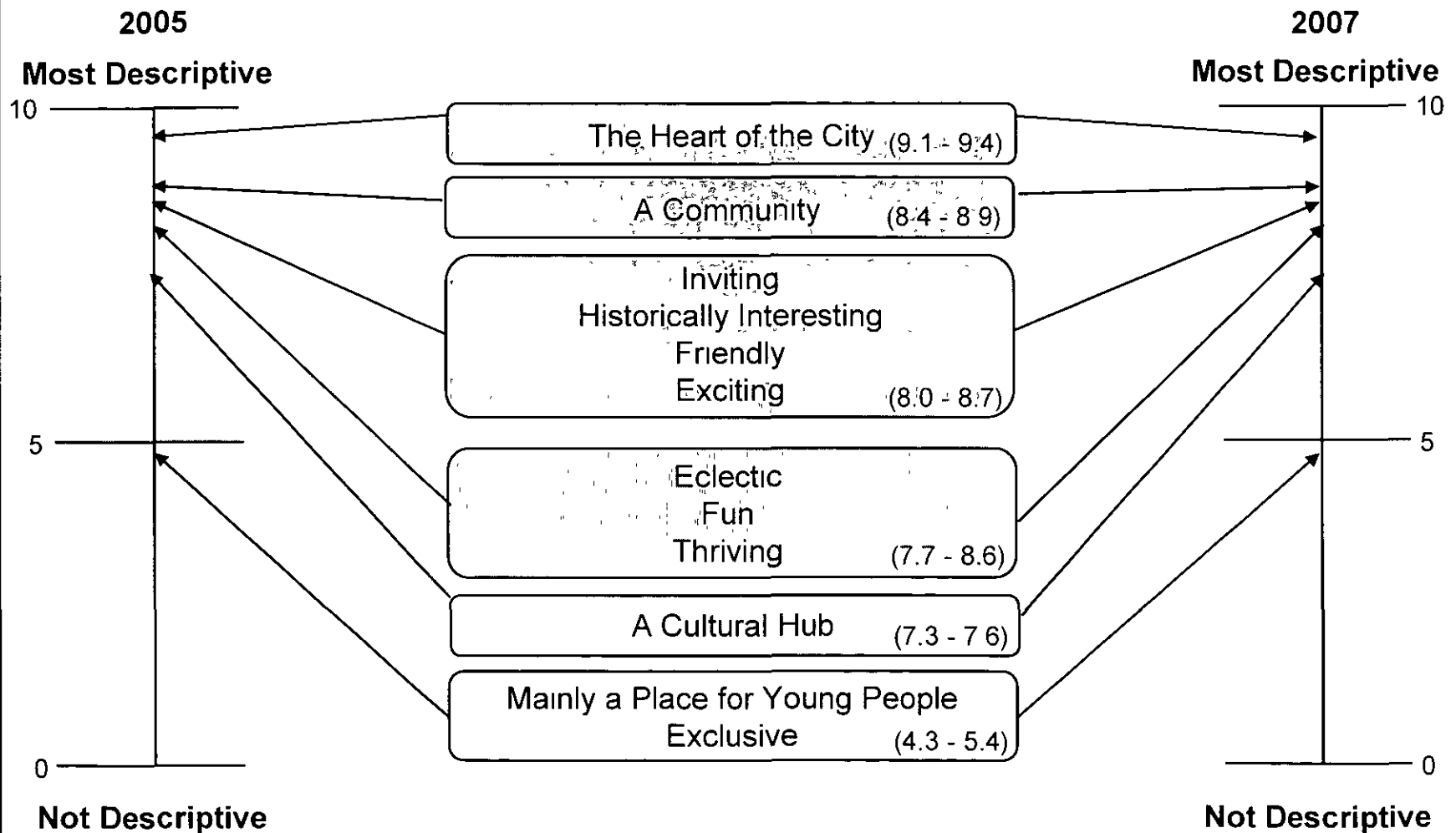
When it Comes to Transportation Issues

# Evaluation of Downtown Compared to 3 Years Ago

		2005		2007							
		All Groups		Prop O&Ms n=100		Bus O&Ms n=100		Emps n=100		NBRs n=350	
		% Better	% Worse	% Better	% Worse	% Better	% Worse	% Better	% Worse	% Better	% Worse
<b>Notably Better</b>	Interesting places and things	64%	9%	74%	8%	66%	10%	56%	5%	61%	9%
	Safety during the day	64%	7%	58%	6%	67%	4%	57%	14%	63%	8%
	Desirable place to shop	64%	11%	63%	10%	58%	9%	64%	15%	63%	11%
	Desirable place to live	64%	10%	63%	11%	64%	8%	61%	7%	60%	10%
	Visual appeal	62%	8%	67%	3%	62%	12%	55%	13%	60%	10%
	Cleanliness of streets and buildings	60%	10%	60%	10%	66%	5%	54%	11%	56%	10%
	Safety during the night	59%	9%	57%	5%	60%	12%	55%	12%	55%	11%
	Desirable place to work	52%	6%	39%	10%	53%	5%	61%	5%	55%	5%
<b>Not Better</b>	Getting Around Downtown	40%	15%	42%	10%	37%	19%	40%	14%	39%	17%
	Commute to Downtown	23%	15%	24%	17%	22%	15%	21%	14%	23%	15%



# Image of Downtown



\*Based on all four stakeholder groups (Prop O&Ms, Bus O&Ms, Emps, and NBRs) combined

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## **3 Predominant Strengths of Downtown**

- **“The Atmosphere”**
  - » Energy / People / Attitude / History
  
- **“The Happenings”**
  - » Festivals / Museums / Art Exhibits / Music / Entertainment
  
- **“The Growth”**
  - » Positive Changes / Tourism / New Businesses / Residential Growth
  
- Other
  - » Specific Attractions, Green Spaces, Safety, Cleanliness

## **5 Predominant Weaknesses of Downtown**

- **Inadequate Parking**
- **Traffic / Transportation**
- **Growth**
  - » Too Much, Too Fast; Overcrowding, Construction
- **Natural Environment**
  - » Park Maintenance, Neglected Green Spaces, Lack of Cleanliness, Pollution
- **Atmosphere**
  - » Inadequate Preservation / Improvement of Historic and Cultural Sites; Erosion of Distinctive Character

Other

- » Need for More Shopping

# Transportation To & Within Downtown

- The vast majority of stakeholders drive their own vehicles to the downtown area.
- Within downtown, most drive or walk; a small percentage (8% - 19%) use public transportation.
- Most Nearby Residents (70%) who visit but do not work downtown drive their cars to get around the downtown area (data not shown here).
- Transportation patterns are nearly unchanged since 2005

		Prop O&Ms n=100	Bus O&Ms n=100	Emps n=100
<b>Downtown Commute</b>	Own Vehicle	67%	72%	76%
	Car Pool	17%	15%	12%
	Public	11%	7%	4%
	Walk / Bike	5%	6%	6%
<b>Within Downtown</b>	Own Vehicle	41%	44%	46%
	Public	8%	19%	7%
	Walk	47%	40%	38%

Note Columns may not sum to 100% as some say "it depends"

*How do you typically commute to and from downtown? Do you <drive your own vehicle, car pool or van pool, take public transportation such as the bus or the Dillo, or do you walk or ride a bicycle>?*

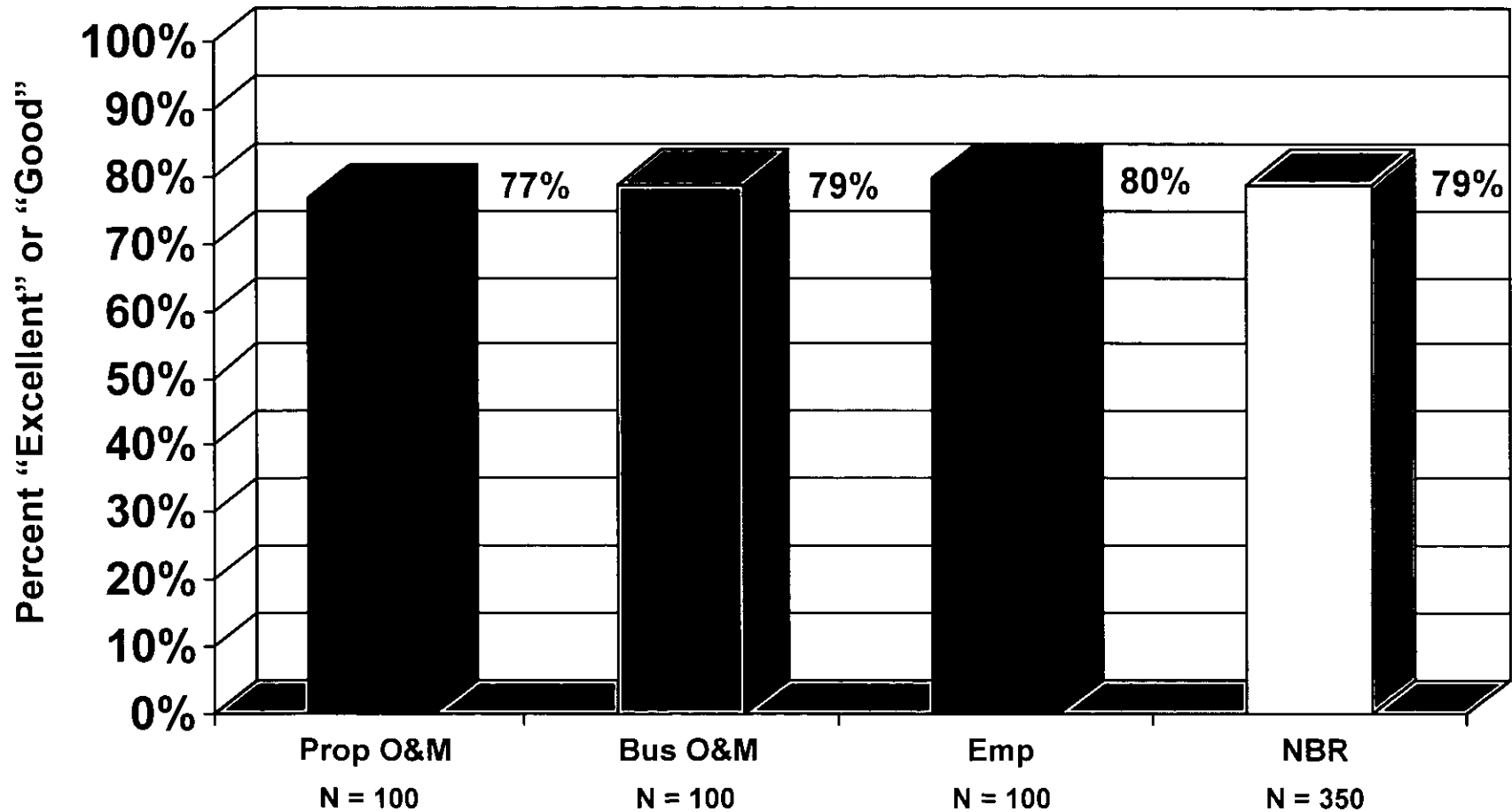
*How do you typically get around downtown? Do you <drive your own vehicle, take public transportation such as the bus or the Dillo, or do you walk or ride a bicycle>?*

## **Familiarity with the DAA**

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- Roughly three-quarters of Prop O&Ms and Bus O&Ms are familiar with the DAA—this is a decline in familiarity among Prop O&Ms (from 90% in 2005).
- Roughly 70% of Employees and NBRs are familiar with the DAA.

## Overall Evaluation of the DAA



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# Importance of DAA Activities Going Forward

2007 Mean Ratings

	Prop O&M n=100	Bus O&M n=100	Emp n=100
Facilitating Development of Downtown Housing	8.5	8.1	7.9
Sidewalk Improvement & Tree Planting	8.4	8.5	8.4
Facilitating the Expansion of Downtown Shopping	8.3	8.1	8.1
Working to Attract and Retain Downtown Business	8.3	7.8	8.0
Providing Information on DAA Website	8.2	8.0	8.0
Improving the Appeal and Use of East 6 <sup>th</sup> Street	8.2	8.0	7.8
Increasing Security in Downtown	8.1	8.4	8.1
Working with City to Reduce the Impact of Street Closures	8.1	7.7	8.3
Facilitating the Availability of more Parking for Downtown Visitors	8.1	7.8	8.2
Advocating for the Development of Arts and Culture in Downtown	8.1	8.2	7.7
Promoting Downtown Austin via TV	8.1	8.0	7.5
Advocating for Revitalization of Public Parks Downtown	8.0	8.3	8.1
Taking a Leadership Role in Downtown Transportation Planning	7.9	8.4	7.5

On a 10 point scale, where 1 is "not at all important" and 10 is "very important," how important do you think it is that the DAA pursue the following <sidewalk improvement & tree planting, increasing security in downtown, facilitating availability of more parking for downtown visitors, facilitating the development of downtown housing, working to attract and retain businesses in downtown locations, advocating to develop arts and culture in downtown, working with the city to reduce the impact of street closures, improving the appeal and use of East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, taking a leadership role in downtown transportation planning, facilitating the expansion of shopping downtown, advocating for revitalization of public parks downtown, providing information relevant to downtown on the DAA website, and promoting downtown through television programming>?

## **Stakeholders' Suggestions for the DAA**

- **Improve Parking Access**
  
- **Solve Transportation Problem**
  - » Planning / Short and Long Term
  
- **Ensure Beautification**
  - » Parks / Cleanliness, Preservation of Historic Sites
  
- Other
  - » Increase communications
  - » Offer volunteer opportunities



## Summary

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- **Very Favorable Evaluations of Downtown**
- **Strengths are Character, Atmosphere, Attractions, and Growth**
- **Favorable Evaluations of the DAA**
- **Challenges Remain: Parking, Transportation, Green Space, Character**