

Design Downtown Denton Business Owner Survey

In fall of 2023, business owners in Downtown Denton were asked to share their experiences and perspectives on Downtown, specifically regarding cost, business operations, Downtown events and potential public improvements. Surveys represented here were conducted in person or by email in addition to the online surveys summarized in the Fall Engagement Summary.

What attracted you to downtown?

Many were attracted to downtown because of walkability, foot traffic, and the central location of Downtown Denton. Proximity to the city and surrounding universities, coupled with a vibrant and active downtown atmosphere, were frequently cited as appealing elements. Several respondents mentioned the significance of being part of the Denton community, with a strong emphasis on local businesses and a sense of belonging. For some, the historic charm of the buildings on the Square and the unique environment downtown played a crucial role in their choice. Overall, the recurring themes include the centrality of the location, foot traffic dynamics, community engagement, and the distinctive character of Downtown Denton.

Do you rent or own your building? If you rent, do you have concerns about staying at your location due to rental costs?

A majority of the businesses rent their spaces, with most tenants expressing no concerns about their current rental arrangements. Some business owners own their buildings, highlighting the challenges of high taxes for property owners. There are instances where tenants express concerns about potential increases in rent costs, particularly after renovations or over an extended period. Some businesses have a positive relationship with their landlords, while others cite issues with landlords, such as rising prices and controversial treatment of tenants. Overall, the perspectives on renting or owning are diverse, with factors like rent stability, property conditions, and landlord relationships influencing the businesses' satisfaction with their current locations.

What other businesses, attractions, or other developments Downtown contribute to your success?

Businesses in Downtown Denton find various factors contributing to their success. Many emphasize the positive impact of continuous festivals, events, and parades, bringing foot traffic and enhancing the vibrant atmosphere. The diversity of businesses, including vintage clothing stores, antique shops, restaurants, and bars, is mentioned as a crucial element in creating a dynamic and attractive downtown. Collaboration and community among downtown business owners are highlighted as key factors, with some establishments offering discounts to other square businesses and fostering a sense of camaraderie. The proximity to the university and the presence of live music venues, upscale alternatives, and unique shops are noted as beneficial for drawing diverse crowds and creating a distinctive identity for Downtown Denton.

While some businesses express concerns about negative construction impacts or a lack of foot traffic during certain periods, the overall sentiment is positive, emphasizing the interconnectedness and collaborative spirit that contributes to the success of businesses in the area.

Are there downtown businesses that you feel would detract from your business?

Chain stores and service based industries like attorneys offices, development firms and car dealerships detract from business because they do not support a walkable downtown with interest along each street. Businesses that are vacant or under construction are deterrents to potential business.

What Downtown events, if any, contribute most to your success?

There were conflicting answers to this question. Businesses noted that events can be helpful to attract more people downtown, but those increased numbers do not equate to an increase in sales. Additionally, some events block street access and are not communicated and coordinated successfully with each business. That being said, some respondents said that the Day of the Dead, Jazz Parades and Holiday Lighting were successful. Arts and Autos was a challenging event.

What types of public improvements (for example sidewalks or parks) Downtown would be most beneficial to your business?

Sidewalk cleaning, street cleaning, improved lighting, better recycling programs, murals, historic building restoration, and general downtown beautification were suggested by many respondents. Additionally, metrics to improve pedestrian safety were mentioned several times. These included suggestions for dedicated bike and scooter lanes to reduce conflicts with sidewalks, the redesign of all-way crosswalks, providing ADA accessible ramps, improved grading on Hickory and fixing cracked concrete. Respondents mentioned the need for improved resources for unhoused people downtown along with improved parks and public restrooms. Although making the square pedestrian-only in the square would improve pedestrian safety, there was concern that this would be difficult for some businesses who need parking. Parking was mentioned by many respondents. Some say that paid parking is problematic, some want a parking garage, some need employee only parking and load/unload spaces. Signage was mentioned based on concerns for lack of updated signage for business and unclear one-way signage along the right of way.

Do you have any other comments for us?

It was commented that homelessness is a constant issue downtown. There should be more retail on the square, and general safety improvements such as lighting, clean sidewalks and



improved signage for one-ways, parking and businesses. Additionally, some respondents suggested a downtown food hall, an indoor food truck program, the cleaning of the theater building along with limits on vape, liquor and bar businesses downtown. Finally, it was mentioned that Denton needs an identity, noting the success of Austin's "Keep Austin Weird."