

A photograph of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring the PPG Place skyscraper on the left and a bridge on the right. The scene is set against a clear blue sky. A large white circle is superimposed over the center of the image, with the text "WHAT WE LEARNED" written in white capital letters across it. The circle is partially filled with a solid white color, and its outline is a thin white line. The text is centered horizontally and vertically within the circle. The background image shows a river in the foreground, a bridge with multiple arches, and several tall buildings in the background. The lighting suggests it's either early morning or late afternoon, with a warm glow on the buildings.

WHAT WE LEARNED

ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

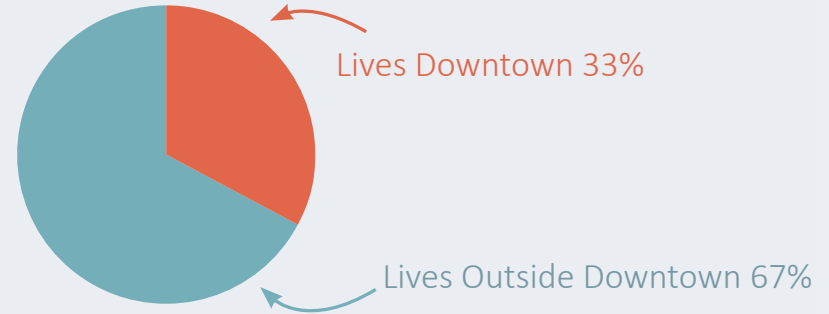
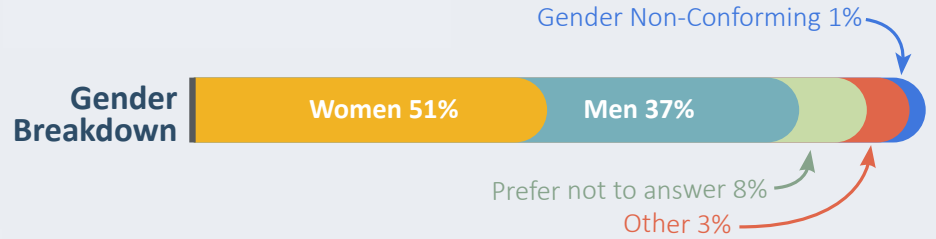
1,000+
RESPONDENTS

13%
LGBTQ+

7%
People of Color

20%
Under 35 Years Old

3%
Hispanic, Latine, or
Spanish origin





WHAT WORKS IN DOWNTOWN SAINT PAUL



DOWNTOWN FEELS MOST ALIVE DURING EVENTS

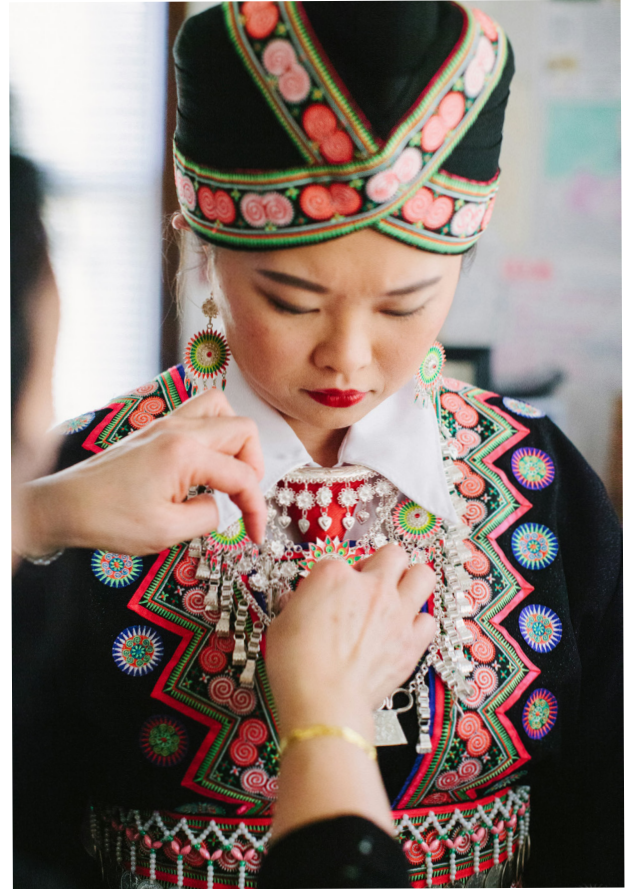
Downtown feels best when it is programmed, crowded, and celebratory. Across groups, respondents say it feels most alive, safe, and **worth visiting during these high energy moments**, indicating it currently **succeeds most as an event district.**

ART AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ARE DEFINING STRENGTHS

Across all groups, arts and cultural institutions are valued as core downtown assets, including:

- The Ordway
- Theaters
- Museums
- Festivals

Cultural density is seen as a defining strength, reinforcing that arts and culture are foundational to downtown's identity.





SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUES SPARK ENERGY

- Major sports and entertainment venues draw people downtown.
- Game days bring energy, dining traffic, and a stronger sense of safety.
- Many now visit primarily for events.
- Downtown functions more as an episodic destination than an everyday neighborhood.

PARKS AND THE RIVERFRONT ARE DOWNTOWN'S GEMS

Frequently mentioned spaces include:

- Mears Park, Rice Park, Pedro Park, Wacouta Commons
- Raspberry Island, Harriet Island, river front trails
- Walking dogs, lunchtime walks, casual strolling



Seasonal lighting, Christmas decorations, and new park openings are especially appreciated.

WALKABILITY AND THE SKYWAYS ARE DEFINING STRENGTHS

Walkability and the skyway system are widely seen as defining strengths, supporting car-light living, accessibility, and easy connections between daily needs. However, closures, limited hours, and vacant storefronts have weakened the system, with some residents saying they would not live downtown without it functioning well.





Transit connects downtown

Transit connects downtown

This group more explicitly mentions:

- Light rail and bus access
- Union Depot as a multimodal hub
- Ability to reach events without driving

Planning insight: Downtown's transit connectivity is an underleveraged asset.



DOWNTOWN'S PAIN POINTS

EVERYDAY AMENITIES HAVE BEEN LOST

This is the most common frustration.

Most cited losses:

- Grocery store (Lunds & Byerlys)
- Restaurants (especially pre-2020 favorites)
- Retail & shopping
- YMCA / fitness options
- Skyway food variety

Impact:

Downtown is described as:

“An event destination, not a neighborhood”

“Dead after 5”

“Only for work now”



Safety is an everyday concern

Safety and disorder are major concerns for many respondents particularly in the:

- evenings
- on transit
- in the skyways

While experiences vary, perceptions of crime, harassment, and cleanliness directly limit park use, transit ridership, evening activity, and family participation.



Global trends have contributed to post-pandemic decline

Many respondents explicitly contrast:

- Pre-2020 vibrancy vs current conditions
- Loss of “hustle,” “buzz,” and casual activity
- Emotional grief and nostalgia for

This sense of decline shapes how people interpret everything else.



Construction, Access and Parking have caused confusion and barriers

Non-residents are more likely than residents to say:

- they avoid downtown except for specific events
- they don't feel comfortable staying late
- parking cost/inconvenience affects decisions
- inflation and reduced hours make outings feel “not worth it”

Several explicitly say they no longer spend money downtown despite liking certain businesses





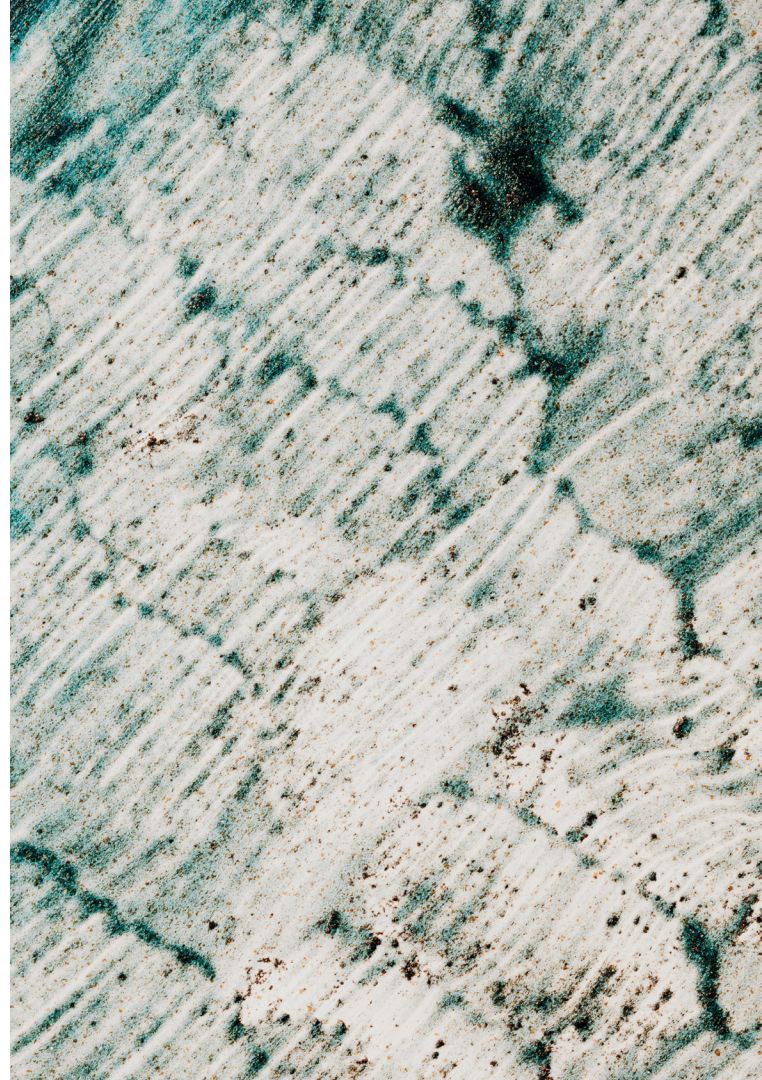
CORE TENSIONS

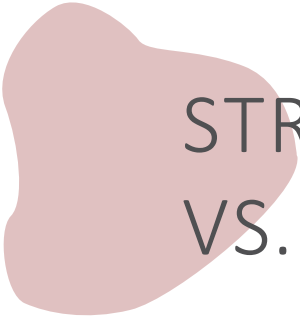
EVENTS VS. EVERYDAY USE

Everyone enjoys events.

But nearly every subgroup says events are not enough.

Downtown currently succeeds episodically and struggles daily.





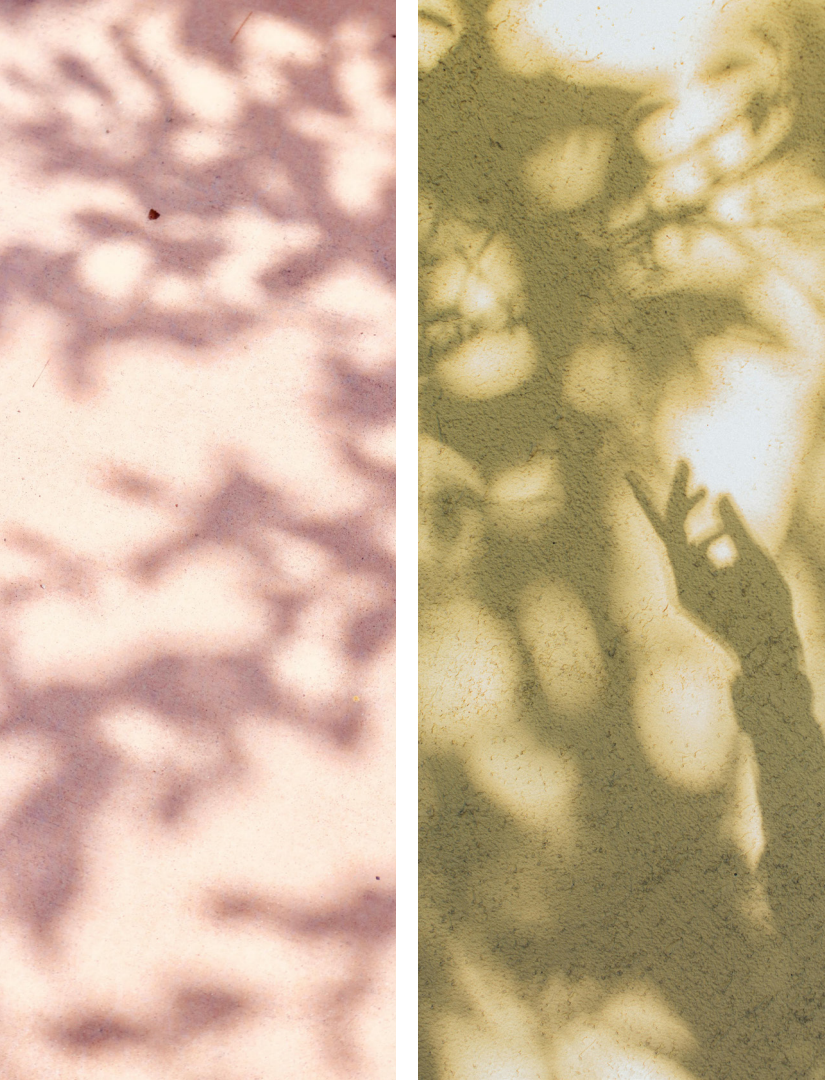
STRONG ANCHORS VS. WEAK FABRIC

Arts venues, sports arenas, and markets work.

But:

- Retail variety is weak.
- Basic services are missing.
- Street-level continuity is broken.





LOVE VS. AVOIDANCE

Many respondents:

- Love downtown.
- Feel nostalgic.
- Want it to succeed.

Yet:

- Visit less frequently.
- Avoid evenings.
- Leave immediately after events.
- Question long-term viability.

This emotional contradiction is consistent across demographics.