



2019  
DOWNTOWN  
MILWAUKEE  
PERCEPTIONS  
REPORT  
2

# BEHIND THE BID

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District (BID) #21, is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the Downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is a management district organization that oversees 150 square blocks representing approximately 500 property owners in the center of Downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe, friendly and vibrant Downtown. These core programs contribute to the quality of life in Downtown Milwaukee, making the district a desirable place to live, work, socialize and conduct business.

# SURVEY BACKGROUND

In an effort to better serve its residents, workers and guests, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 partnered with Community Perceptions, a division of School Perceptions LLC, to conduct a self-selecting perceptions survey to quantify and chronicle the rapid changes occurring in Downtown Milwaukee and the attitudes of various Downtown users.

The survey aimed to understand how the community interacts with Downtown Milwaukee and solicit opinions about a number of topics relating to the experience of living, working and playing in Downtown Milwaukee. The survey was divided into the following categories:

- Respondent demographic information
- Respondent activity preferences in Downtown Milwaukee
- Experiences in Downtown Milwaukee
- Communication about Downtown Milwaukee events and activities
- Retail experiences in Downtown Milwaukee
- Milwaukee venue preferences
- Utilization of transportation and mobility to and around Downtown Milwaukee
- Input about the future of Downtown Milwaukee

This report summarizes the study's key findings and suggests opportunities for enhancing users' experiences.

# METHODOLOGY

The 2019 Downtown Milwaukee Perceptions Survey opened to the public on July 8, 2019 and received 3,005 responses by August 25, 2019. Survey respondents answered a combination of general questions and questions branched based on whether or not respondents self-identified into one of three categories: Downtown resident; Downtown employee, but lives outside of Downtown Milwaukee; or visitor (neither lives nor works in Downtown Milwaukee). Any respondent that self-identified as a business owner/operator in Downtown Milwaukee was also asked an additional subset of business-related questions.

Survey respondents were not required to answer all questions. Mandatory responses were required on those questions which branched the survey based on the identified subsets. On average, the survey took respondents about 10 to 15 minutes to complete, depending on which branch was selected.

Survey participation was self-selecting and encouraged through a variety of means generated by Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, including social media outreach, promotion on the organization's website and media relations efforts. While all survey responses were anonymous, survey participants had the option of signing up for a mailing list to receive continued Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 news and to be entered in a random weekly drawing for a gift card. Participation in either option was not required nor was it tied to survey responses.

The survey was administered by Community Perceptions, a division of School Perceptions LLC. School Perceptions is an independent research firm that specializes in conducting surveys for public and private schools, educational service agencies, communities and other state-level organizations.

### BID BIT:

Downtown Milwaukee represents 3.5% of the City's landmass, yet Downtown property owners contribute 22.6% to the City's overall property tax base.

### BID BIT:

Since 2017, the value of all properties within BID #21's boundaries have risen by approximately 18.8%.

### BID BIT:

Milwaukee Downtown's Clean Sweep Ambassadors removed over 219,600 gallons of trash and coordinated 63 Super Block Cleanups in the last year, which included a top-to-bottom cleaning of streets and signage.

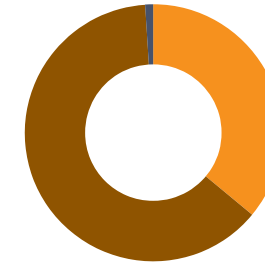
### BID BIT:

Milwaukee Downtown's Landscape Crew tends to over 377 beds and 75 hanging baskets year-round.

### BID BIT:

Milwaukee Downtown's Public Service Ambassadors have tallied more than 4.4 million interactions with guests since 2000.

# RESPONDENT PROFILE

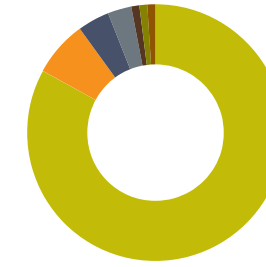


### GENDER

- 36% Male
- 63% Female
- 1% Nonbinary or other

### RACE/ETHNICITY

- 83% Caucasian (non-Hispanic)
- 7% Prefer not to answer
- 4% African/African American
- 3% Hispanic/Latino
- 1% Asian/Asian American
- 1% Native American
- 1% Other group
- 0% Pacific Islander



### HAS CHILDREN (17 YEARS OR YOUNGER)

- 18% Yes
- 82% No

### BID BIT:

Downtown Milwaukee is home to over 32,000 residents and more than 90,700 workers.



### AGE

- .2% Under 18
- 2% 18 to 22
- 12% 23 to 29
- 12% 30 to 34
- 19% 35 to 44
- 18% 45 to 54
- 21% 55 to 64
- 16% 65 or older



### EDUCATION

- 41% Undergraduate/four-year college
- 33% Graduate or professional degree
- 12% Some college
- 7% Trade school/community/technical college
- 4% High school or equivalent
- 2% Current college student
- 1% Prefer not to answer
- .1% Less than high school completed

### Highly Educated

Downtown users, whether they are residents, workers or visitors, are highly educated, with 74% having a four-year degree or additional accreditation.

### High Income Earners

The majority of respondents (50%) who provided their data, reported annual household incomes in a range between \$50,000 and \$149,000. Further, over 40% of respondents reported earning a household income of \$100,000 or more, demonstrating that those with an active interest in Downtown Milwaukee possess strong purchasing power.



### LIVES IN DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE

- 24% Yes
- 76% No



### WORKS IN DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE

- 44% Yes
- 56% No

### Established Resident Base

Downtown Milwaukee is a neighborhood that people are proud to call home – and for an established amount of time. With 3,005 respondents to the survey, 24% identified as residents of Downtown Milwaukee. Of those who identified as residents of Downtown Milwaukee, 55% reported living Downtown for five years or longer, indicating that those who choose to live Downtown tend to be long-term residents.



### NON-DOWNTOWN RESIDENCY ORIGINS

- 51% Outside of Downtown Milwaukee, but within the City of Milwaukee
- 30% Outside of the City of Milwaukee, but within Milwaukee County
- 19% Outside of Milwaukee County, but in Southeastern Wisconsin (Ozaukee, Washington, Waukesha, Racine, Walworth or Kenosha County)
- .4% Outside of Southeastern Wisconsin, but in Wisconsin
- .1% Out-of-state resident

### LENGTH OF DOWNTOWN RESIDENCY

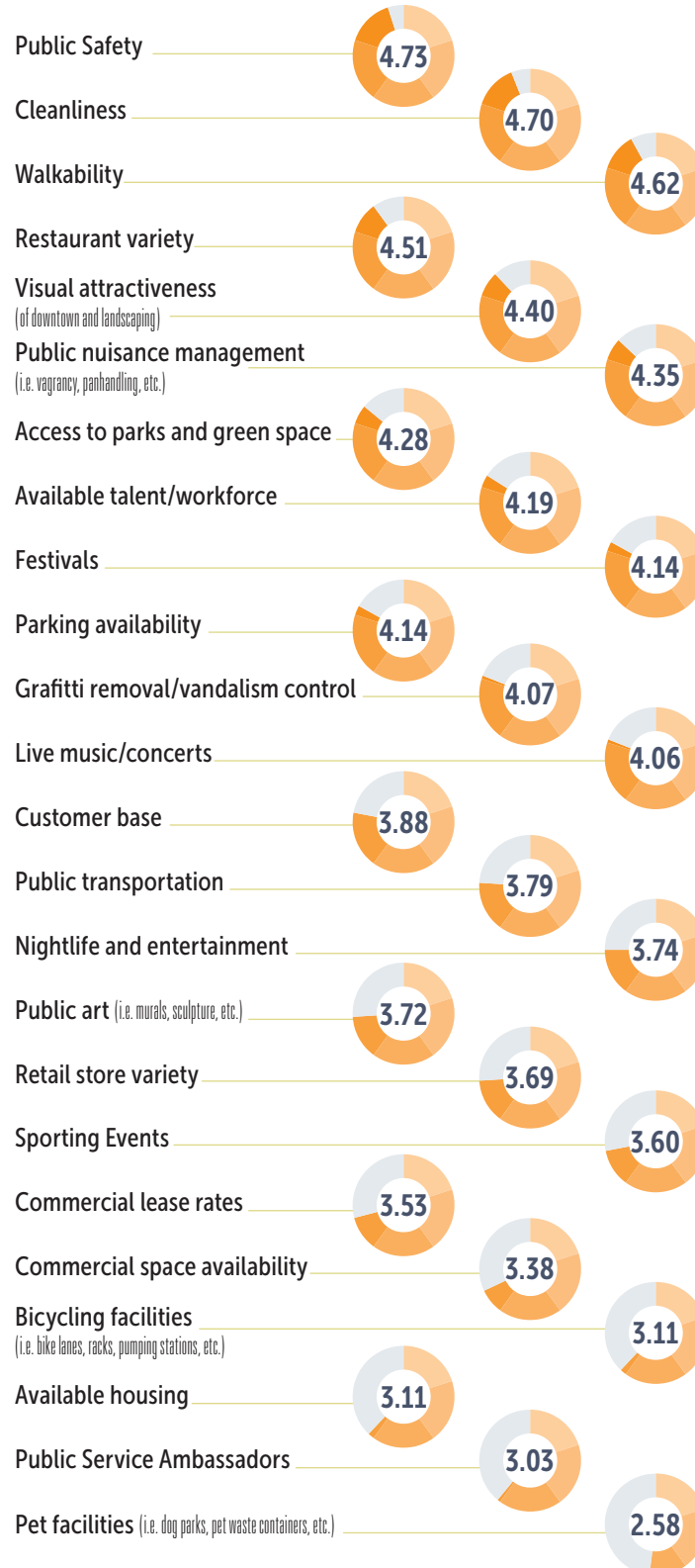
- 8% Less than a year
- 9% One year to less than 2 years
- 10% 2 years to less than 3 years
- 9% 3 years to less than 4 years
- 9% 4 years to less than 5 years
- 28% 5 to 10 years
- 15% 11 to 19 years
- 11% 20 or more years
- 1% I have never lived in Downtown Milwaukee

# WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF DOWNTOWN

Ensuring positive perceptions of Downtown Milwaukee is the driving force behind Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. Cleanliness, safety and friendliness are critical factors for establishing a thriving environment. While much has changed since we started in 1998, our passion has not. We continue to raise the bar with expanded services, new events, collaborative partnerships and initiatives to provide positive experiences to all our users.

## Importance of Downtown's Offerings

Very Important (5) - Not Important (1)

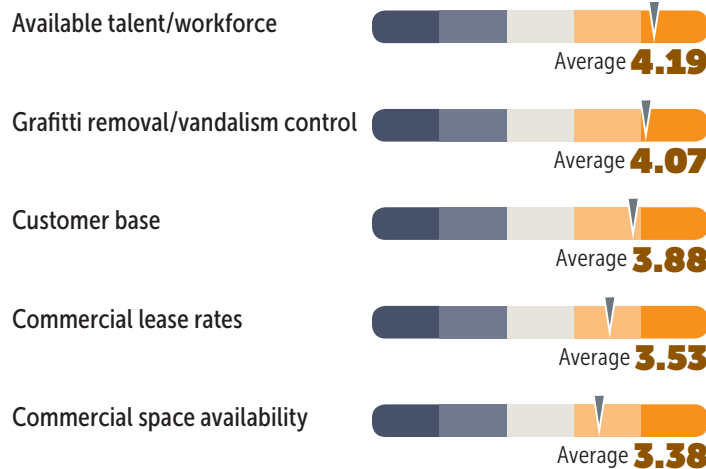


STRONGLY DISAGREE 1 DISAGREE 2 NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE 3 AGREE 4 STRONGLY AGREE 5

## Perceptions of Downtown



## Importance of Select Metrics by Downtown Business Owners/Operators



## Welcoming Our Four-Legged Friends

Among resident respondents, 24% self-identified as dog owners and 71% of Downtown resident respondents, who are dog owners, categorized adding dog-friendly amenities in the Downtown area as "important" or "very important."

## Clean and Safe

Downtown Milwaukee received high marks on overall improvement, safety and visual appeal, all being over 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, which validates the work of Milwaukee Downtown.

## Business Activity & Development

Downtown business owners and operators ranked access to a talented workforce as a top priority. As such, Milwaukee Downtown's core programs and innovative approaches aim to build a vibrant community that is attractive to workers and companies alike. With record investment and growing daytime and nighttime densities, these strategies are helping to advance Milwaukee

**BID BIT:**  
Since 2010, more than \$3.5 billion has been invested in public and private projects. Meanwhile, over \$2.5 billion in development is currently under construction or slated to start soon.

# WHAT PEOPLE DO DOWNTOWN

With world-class cultural arts, award-winning restaurants, a state-of-the-art sports arena, the world's largest music festival, a 3.1-mile internationally-recognized RiverWalk, and acres upon acres of public greenspace and beaches, Downtown Milwaukee is an 18-hour city buzzing with diverse offerings that appeal to everyone from baby boomers to Gen Z.

## Top Venues

All respondents were asked a variety of questions to gauge their interaction and the frequency of that interaction with Downtown Milwaukee events and venues. Among residents, visitors and commuters, the Milwaukee Public Market was rated as their top destination choice (71% of all respondents). The Milwaukee RiverWalk, Milwaukee Art Museum and Henry Maier Festival Park/Summerfest Grounds followed closely behind.

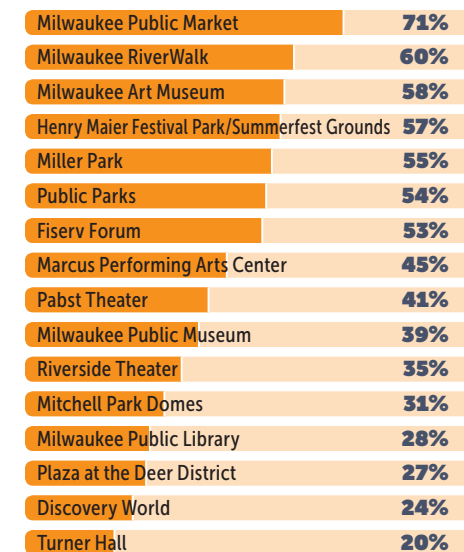
**BID BIT:**  
In 2018, the Milwaukee Public Market welcomed nearly 1.8 million visitors and hit over \$18 million in vendor sales – a consecutive record-breaking year for the top-rated destination.

## Sociability an Important Economic Driver

Downtown Milwaukee is the economic and social engine of the region. Residents, visitors and commuters were consistent in the general categories of activities they most frequent in Downtown Milwaukee. Dining is the top activity of all respondents, with 62% reporting that they dine in Downtown Milwaukee at least four times a month or more. Nearly 92% of all respondents have dined in Downtown Milwaukee at least a few times during the past year.

**BID BIT:**  
Downtown Milwaukee's nighttime economy generates over \$212 million in annual sales.

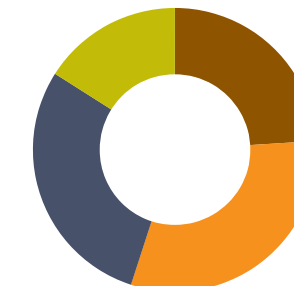
## Top Venues Among All Downtown Users



## Retail Wish Lists



## Shopping Frequency



**24%** REGULARLY, Once a month or more  
**31%** OCCASIONALLY, Several times in a year  
**29%** SELDOM, Once or twice in the last year  
**16%** NEVER, Not in the last year

## How do you engage with Downtown?

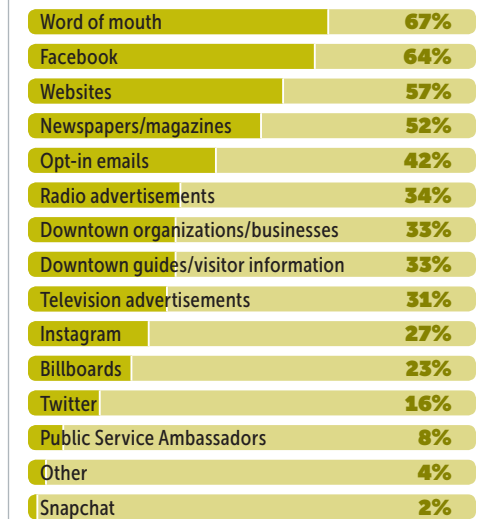


**BID BIT:**  
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 engages with a social media follower base of 112,500+ fans across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In the last year, over 52,500 engagements were tracked on Facebook.

## Retail

Approximately 55% of all respondents do some shopping Downtown, but are also eager for more options. Respondents generally indicated the desire for more locally-owned retailers, apparel stores and mid-box stores like an urban-formatted Target, which is becoming more common in city centers. This is especially the case with Downtown residents who cited the need to travel outside of Downtown for these types of retailers.

## Sources of Info for Downtown Milwaukee News, Events and Activities



## Sources of Info

All Downtown users listed word of mouth (67%) as their top channel for information, followed by Facebook (64%) and websites (56%). Similarly, residents indicated their top source for info was also word of mouth (67%), followed by Facebook (66%) and websites (59%).



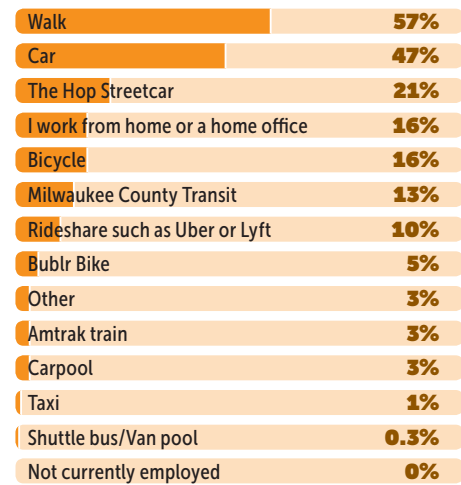
# HOW PEOPLE GET AROUND DOWNTOWN

In November 2018, Downtown Milwaukee became easier to navigate with the launch of The Hop – the city’s modern streetcar service. While Phase 1 connects the Historic Third Ward, Intermodal Station, central business district and Lower East Side, future route extensions are currently being planned to link new neighborhoods to Downtown. Meanwhile, public transportation options, parking, walkability and wayfinding solutions are continuously explored to enhance Downtown Milwaukee’s mobility and connectivity.

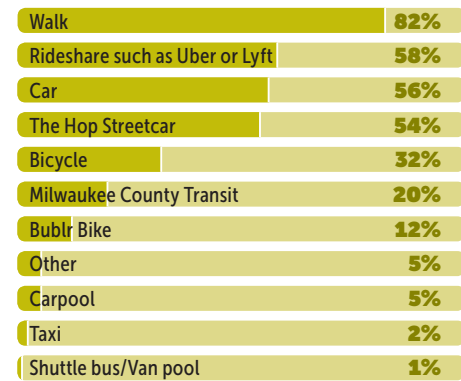
## Downtown is a “Walker’s Paradise”

Downtown users, especially Downtown employees, ranked walkability as a key method for getting around. More than half (57%) of Downtown employees reported walking to work. Moreover, Walkscore grades Downtown Milwaukee’s zip codes at a 92, meaning it’s a “Walker’s Paradise” and daily errands can easily be done on foot.

## Modes of Transportation to Work by Downtown Residents and Workers



## Modes of Transportation for Leisure by Downtown Residents and Workers



### BID BIT:

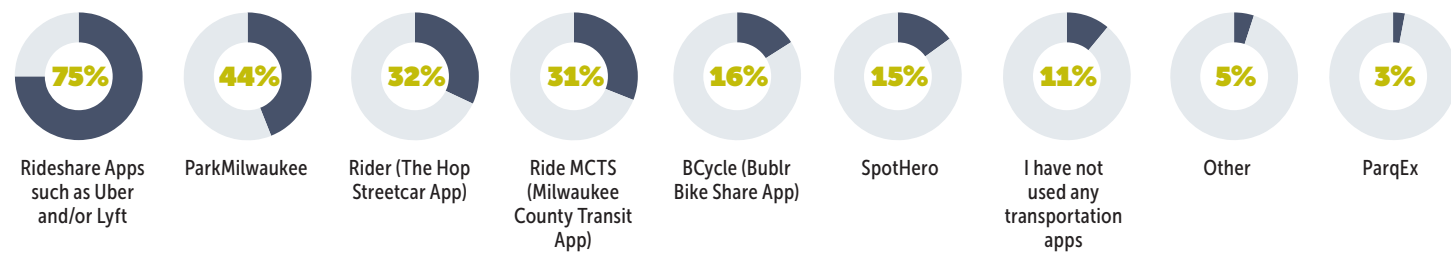
In its first 11 months of operation, The Hop presented by Potawatomi Hotel & Casino provided 740,531 free rides.

\* Please note, survey respondents could select multiple options in this section.

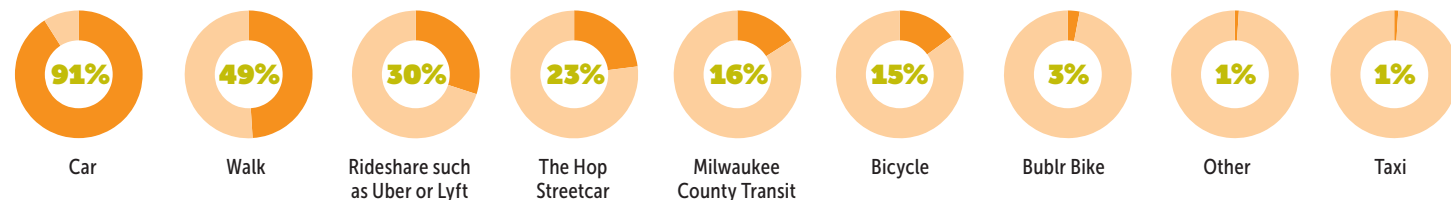
## Transportation Apps Contribute to Mobility

A large majority of all respondents (89%), indicated comfortability with using transportation apps on their smart phones. The highest rated usage were rideshare apps such as Uber/Lyft, followed by ParkMilwaukee (44%), The Hop (32%) and Ride MCTS (31%).

## Transportation Apps Used by Downtown Residents & Workers



## Modes of Transportation by Downtown Visitors



## Usage of The Hop by Downtown Residents and Workers



**65%** YES, more than one time  
**10%** YES, only one time  
**16%** NO, but I plan to do so in the future  
**9%** NO, and I do not plan to do so in the future

## The Hop

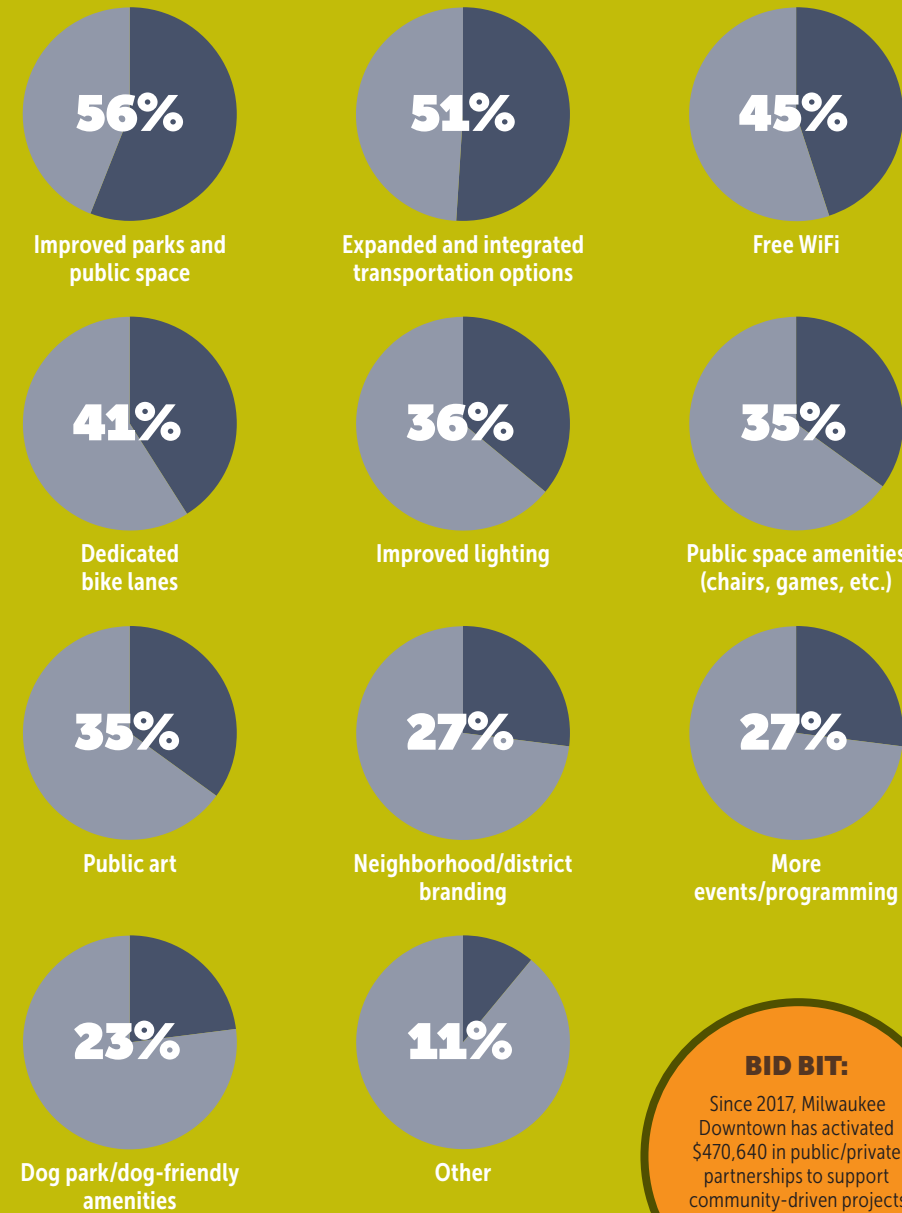
Approximately one in five Downtown respondents (21%) uses The Hop as a means to get to and from work, and ridership jumps to 54% as a recreational option for residents. Additionally, among those who work or visit Downtown Milwaukee, 26% reported that they board The Hop for leisure activities. Given its popularity since its launch, it’s no wonder The Hop is exceeding ridership projections.

# MOVING FORWARD

Survey respondents had an opportunity to provide additional feedback regarding their interactions with Downtown Milwaukee in the comment sections. Prevailing themes, found both in the multiple choice and open-ended sections, included homelessness, road and sidewalk repairs, the cost of parking, more pedestrian and bike-friendly options, and improving the cleanliness of public and private properties. Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 will review these suggestions, along with feedback gathered during a post-survey focus group to shape the organization’s strategic plan for 2020 and beyond.

## Where Should Resources Be Dedicated?

\* Please note, survey respondents could select multiple options in this section.



### BID BIT:

In July 2019, the Common Council adopted the City of Milwaukee’s first pedestrian plan to improve safety, walkability and accessibility for people in Milwaukee.

### BID BIT:

Downtown Dining Week, the city’s premier restaurant week coordinated by Milwaukee Downtown, attracts over 70,000 diners in an eight-day period to 35 restaurants.

### BID BIT:

Since 2017, Milwaukee Downtown has activated \$470,640 in public/private partnerships to support community-driven projects that program third spaces.

### BID BIT:

Through fundraising efforts for its Key to Change program, Milwaukee Downtown secured year-one funding to hire its first dedicated Downtown Homeless Outreach Coordinator.

### BID BIT:

Sculpture Milwaukee, the city’s annual outdoor art exhibition, welcomed 22 world-class sculptures along Wisconsin Avenue for its third edition. Since the exhibition’s opening year, three sculptures have been purchased anonymously and gifted to the community, creating a legacy of public art throughout Downtown.

### BID BIT:

With over 67,000 college students within a five-mile radius, Downtown Milwaukee offers an educated pool of talent.

“We made the decision to bring Bader Rutter back downtown for one overriding reason: We were searching for a great experience for our people and our clients. Simple as that.”

— Greg Nickerson, former CEO, Bader Rutter



To view the complete white paper report of the 2019 Downtown Milwaukee Perceptions Survey, visit [www.milwaukee-downtown.com/do-business](http://www.milwaukee-downtown.com/do-business).



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