

# AN EMAIL SURVEY

conducted for  
the

## DOWNTOWN LEXINGTON PARTNERSHIP

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These are highlights from the email surveys conducted for the Downtown Lexington Partnership from January 20 to January 26, 2020.

### How do metropolitan Lexington residents patronize Downtown?

- An impressive 88% of the residents living in the seven counties surveyed had been to Downtown Lexington in the prior six months, either because they work there (23%), live there (12%) or come for leisure pursuits (53%). This is up significantly from the 2018 downtown usage of 80%, and it is higher than the National Downtown Benchmark average of 73%. The most frequent leisure pursuit is dining at a Downtown restaurant, which 76% of those surveyed had done in the prior six months, averaging 4 meals over that time period. Moreover, a strong segment of 80% say they have combined dining Downtown with some other activity.
- Other frequent pursuits for area residents in Downtown Lexington are shopping at a retail store (53%), attending a sporting event or going to hear live music (both 34%), and bike/walk/run (29%).
- The demographics of area residents who had recently visited Downtown are younger families with children, particularly those in the highest-income segments. The small segment who do not patronize Downtown (only 12% of those surveyed) were most likely to be senior citizens with household incomes of less than \$50,000.
- An average of 130 minutes was spent by those who had recently visited Downtown Lexington, or more than two hours, during which time they spent an average of nearly \$65. These are both comparable to the responses in the 2018 survey.
- A majority of Downtown users drive their own car to get to Downtown Lexington (72%), making parking issues very important. Fortunately, nearly three-fourths of those who drive Downtown believe that parking there is very or somewhat affordable (72%). The segment of those who carpool in someone else's car to get to Downtown Lexington has increased significantly, from just 3% in 2018 to 16% currently.
- For those who work in Downtown Lexington (23% of those surveyed, a strong base), their roundtrip commute is only 32 minutes. In spite of this relatively short commute, interest in taking mass transit (if more options were developed) jumped from 33% in 2018 to 72% in this year's survey.

**What attitudes do metropolitan Lexington residents have about Downtown?**

- Downtown users believe that Downtown Lexington's greatest strength is its large selection of restaurants and shops (81% agree) and entertainment options (80%). Positive perceptions of Downtown's cleanliness and safety have slipped some since the 2018 surveys were conducted (from 81% to 66% for cleanliness and from 67% to 56% for safety), but those perceptions are still more positive in Lexington than in the National Downtown Benchmark.
- The only Downtown attribute which fewer Downtown users agree with is that it's easy to find parking, which only 33% believe is true. However, that is a problem for all downtowns and the National Downtown Benchmark percentage is even lower, at just 24%.
- Non-users were first asked an open-ended question about why they do not go Downtown, and a majority of 52% said they had no reason to do so. The only reason that DLP can do much to address is that 9% say that parking is a reason that keeps them from coming Downtown.
- Non-users were read a list of 12 statements, and the ones with which more agreed were that parking is expensive (68%) and Downtown's traffic flow is confusing/congested (61%). As with users, the aspect of Downtown Lexington that non-users are most positive about is that the area is clean (91%).

**How do Downtown users feel about Downtown's role as an economic development engine?**

- In a new question asked this year, Downtown users were asked about their level of agreement with 5 economic development statements about Downtown Lexington. A majority of Downtown Users are very positive about downtown as an important economic development asset for Lexington. In particular, users overwhelmingly felt that downtown presents a positive image and source of pride (84% agreement), and is important for talent retention and recruitment (83% agreement) and as an economic development engine (81%).

**How do metropolitan Lexington residents feel about a list of new Downtown initiative that the Downtown Partnership might undertake?**

- Downtown users were very excited about most of the 5 possible new initiatives that DLP has considered, particularly improving the Pedway system (96%) and a wayfinding program (85%). Non-users also feel that a wayfinding program would be likely to get them to come downtown (58%). There was somewhat less, but still strong interest by Downtown users in an outdoor dining initiative (81%), a shuttle between Downtown and the Distillery District (75%) and creating more public art Downtown (69%).
- In addition to the 12% who now live Downtown, another 24% say they would be somewhat or very likely to consider a move there; this interest is double what it was in 2018, when it was just 12%. They are looking for single-family, single-level homes that they would be more likely to rent at moderate rates of \$900 a month.
- Only 21% say there is an attraction, entertainment, shopping or dining experience that is missing in Downtown Lexington (down from 36% in 2018). The missing attractions that were most likely to be identified are entertainment venues, including a movie theater, and more retail stores including a grocery store and a drugstore.

**How do metropolitan Lexington residents hear about leisure-time activities?**

- After word of mouth from friends and family, television and the DLP website are the places that most residents would go for information about leisure activities. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have eclipsed search engines like Google in this year's survey, by a margin of 80% to 54%.

These recommendations are made for the DLP to consider, as it prepares strategies and programs for the upcoming year:

- The DLP should promote Downtown for its many activities, led by dining, shopping, attending sporting events, listening to live music and exercise (biking/running/walking).
- In its marketing efforts, the selection of restaurants, entertainment and shops, should be the focus for the DLP.
- Three of the economic development messages which resonate most with Downtown users are: “Downtown presents a positive image to visitors and pride for the region’s residents” (85%) and “Success of Downtown helps recruit new companies, talent and young people” (84%) and “Downtown is an important economic development engine” (81%). These messages should be used by DLP with stakeholders, funders and the general public.
- All 5 of the new initiatives which DLP tested in this survey should be evaluated for how much money and how much time each would require, so as to prioritize among the 5 which can be done in the near term. These are listed below, with the percentage who believe them to be important, and all appear to be fairly important to residents.

Improved Pedway system (86%)

Wayfinding program (85%)

Outdoor dining initiative (81%)

Shuttle between Downtown and the Distillery District (75%)

Creating more public art in Downtown (69%)