



Revitalizing



**Suburban Downtown
Retail Districts**

Strategies & Best Practices

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Why do Downtown Retail Districts Matter?.....	3
Retail Typology	4
Retail District Uses.....	4
What are the Trends Affecting Retail Districts?.....	8
Chapter Two: Evaluating Suburban Retail Districts in Greater Philadelphia	11
Chapter Three: Applying the Characteristics of Successful Retail Districts	27
Managed.....	28
Retail-Appropriate	31
Pedestrian-Friendly	34
Parking Options	37
Unified	39
Transit-Accessible	42
Programmed.....	44
Chapter Four: Municipal Actions to Revitalize Retail Districts	47
Prepare a Retail District Plan	47
Improve the Development Review Process	51
Update Retail Zoning	52
Provide Incentives to Attract New Retail.....	53
Enlist Partners	56
Track Success	57

Chapter Five: Evaluating Retail Supply and Demand	59
Supply Side of Retail.....	59
Demand Side of Retail.....	60
Evaluation	65
Conclusion.....	67
Sources.....	69

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Use Mix of 71 Visited Older Suburban Retail Districts.....	6
Figure 2: Retail Districts Studied	15
Figure 3: Sidewalk Zones	35
Figure 4: Safety Zones.....	35
Figure 5: Retail Parking Strategies	38
Figure 6: Sample Retail Inventory.....	49
Figure 7: Haddon Heights, NJ Zoning Map.....	52
Figure 8: Sample Trade Area Map	63
Table 1: Retail Elements and Priority	13
Table 2: Retail District Management Types	30
Table 3: Estimated Sales per Square Foot.....	64
Table 4: Sample Capture Rates	64
Table 5: Sample Unmet Demand Calculation	65
Table 6: Average Store Size	65

Executive Summary

Many land use and zoning policies address retail and commercial development, but often fall short of creating and sustaining a thriving retail district that fits the needs of the surrounding population. Through the Strategies for Older Suburbs work program of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, staff compiled information about 71 suburban downtown retail districts in an effort to learn what elements were common among successful older suburban retail districts. Short- and long-term strategies were then developed to help local officials revive these districts and further their economic development goals.

It is imperative that older communities understand how retail fits into the overall quality of life for a community. Understanding why retailers choose particular locations and what factors local officials may be able to influence, are critical to maintaining a competitive edge in the retail market. Recent retail development trends include building a retail district to meet the demands of the baby boomers, increased ethnic diversity, and affluent households. Communities strive to incorporate these trends and create a shopping experience that has a mix of uses and serves all modes of transportation.

Revitalizing Downtown Districts is organized into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the importance of downtown retail districts, focusing on retail trends and typologies. Chapter two outlines the result of the field work and evaluates common elements found in the region that contribute to a retail district's success. Outlined for local governments are seven highly relevant factors to consider when revitalizing any retail district. Chapter three discusses applying the building blocks of a retail district to begin the revitalization process. Chapter four provides specific, retail-ready actions that municipal

officials can influence such as regulatory compliance, zoning regulations, incentives to attract new retail, and working with partners. Chapter five provides local officials simple calculations on how to determine retail supply and demand. This chapter takes the reader through each step and explains where to find critical data. The report is intended for local governments to begin to think about their retail districts in the larger context of the community's economic development goals and quality of life.



High Street in West Chester illustrates the key elements found in successful retail districts such as wide sidewalks, high Walk Score, low vacancy, parking options, anchored, and an involved BID.

Chapter One: Why do Downtown Retail Districts Matter?

A central place primarily has existed to provide goods and services to the surrounding population. Human behavior dictates that people prefer to purchase goods and services from the closest location that offers that good or service. Even after decades of suburban sprawl and an influx of big retailer stores, the same remains true today.

The primary commercial hub in most communities is traditionally the Main Street. While the streets differ in names from community to community, these commercial hubs all have common characteristics such as buildings with retail uses on the ground floor and offices or apartments above. These downtown districts are not just the economic engines of the small towns, but also the primary places for community events and social gatherings.

Downtown retail districts are an integral part of any thriving community. They serve various functions, including these listed below:

Generate tax revenues - Many local communities attempt to attract large retail stores to boost the local tax base. While large developments such as big-box stores might provide higher revenues on a per-parcel basis, they often provide fewer taxes on a per-acre

basis. In other words, dense downtowns provide local governments with greater tax yields per acre. Rather than spending time courting big-box stores, older suburbs would be wise to focus on retaining existing retailers; and creating an environment that is conducive to local entrepreneurs.

Provide employment - Small, local businesses produce jobs for the local economy. By understanding the immediate labor force in their neighborhood, businesses can find local employees.

Provide access to a variety of goods and services - The small-scale retail stores in downtowns offer a variety of goods and services, such as groceries, hardware, apparel, gifts, and even home furnishings. Often customers can have direct contact with the storeowners and receive personalized attention.

Bring community members together - A retail district creates a sense of place and identity for a community. It is a location to have parades and festivals. Local stores are also more likely to donate to local fundraisers. Business owners are more likely to participate in community events and committees.



Phoenixville, PA has undergone a recent revitalization building upon arts and culture venues and new public art throughout the downtown. The mural pays homage to the steel industry that once dominated the local economy.



Ambler, PA, has a thriving downtown full of arts and culture, restaurants, and vintage shops. Downtown Ambler is accessible via regional rail and bus, making it a transit-friendly community.

Retail Typology

Municipal officials are interested in reviving their older downtown retail districts. Two decades ago, national chains avoided downtown locations because of perceived parking issues. Today, many chain stores have rediscovered the benefits of downtown locations. To help local officials in thinking about their retail districts, what follows are definitions (according to the American Planning Association) of downtowns and commercial areas often found in older suburban locations.

Central Business District (CBD) is a major commercial downtown center. An urban downtown district has design features and a diversity of uses including cultural facilities, retail, housing, and ancillary uses.

Commercial Corridors are intended to allow auto-oriented development while encouraging walking, bicycling, and transit with a variety of retail and industrial uses. Commercial corridors are open and place parking in the front of the building for convenience.

Main Streets are the neighborhood shopping area that have a unique character and draw people from outside the area for the shopping experience. Many main streets are part of the National Main Street program.

Neighborhood Commercial Districts are a mix of commercial uses serving more than one residential neighborhood. These small areas specialize in goods and services for nearby residents.

Retail District Uses

As the traditional center of commerce and activity, downtown retail districts have a variety of uses - prime retail, residential, vacant, nonretail (office, day care, yoga studio etc.), cultural, and civic. The best occupants for downtowns are credit-worthy retailers to occupy a majority of the space, especially the first floor, but given the competition and climate for retail, that may be unrealistic. Therefore, having nonretail uses occupy first floor space has become a common occurrence. It is important to understand the impacts each use provides to the vitality of the retail district. The following uses were identified for the 71 districts in this study.

Retail

Retail uses include restaurants, service oriented businesses and convenience stores. Retail stores are placed into three categories (as outlined below): Neighborhood Goods and services (NG&S); Food and Beverage (F&B), and General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings, and Other (GAFO). Small downtowns and neighborhoods should strive to occupy their districts with neighborhood Goods and Services

for the nearby residential community. Once this is achieved, the district can move onto Food & Beverage and then General Merchandise types of retail.

Residential

Residential uses include any single-family dwelling or apartment. Residential uses in retail districts are often found above stores; however some downtowns include single-family detached homes on the main street. These homes are zoned commercial and are often occupied by retail or commercial uses. These are often difficult spaces to fill as they do not meet national retailer standards as being retail appropriate.

Having an established residential community within or in close proximity to the retail district creates a built-in consumer base, as well as an environment that appears to be in motion 24 hours a day.

Vacant

Vacancies should be avoided in a downtown district. Vacancies can occur for many reasons, but the key is to deal with them as they arise. A good rule of thumb is to have a plan in place when a vacancy does happen by allowing for appropriate nonretail uses in the downtown. A vacancy rate below 20 percent is perceived to be a retail-appropriate district.

Nonretail (Office)

With the downturn of the retail market, many downtowns have seen an influx of nonretail uses in otherwise traditional retail space. Nonretail uses include day care, professional offices, yoga or fitness-related uses, and nonprofit offices. Nonretail uses can be positive additions to street activity and should be clearly defined in the zoning code. Ensure that nonretail uses contribute to the vitality of the downtown and sidewalk traffic. At a minimum, be sure that nonretail uses are:

- ✘ Actively occupied and continue the movement of the street;
- ✘ Able to participate in facade programs; allow them to transfer the public realm, such as outdoor café seating, to adjacent restaurants;
- ✘ Participating in the perception of safety on the street by keeping on storefront lighting and maintaining the property; and
- ✘ Visible from the street and if they have a storefront window, ensure attractive displays or activity.

Primary Retail Categories

Neighborhood Goods & Services (NG&S): grocery stores, convenience stores, drugstores, florists, bakeries, delicatessens, butchers, dry cleaners, salons, tailors, laundromats, spas, liquor stores, shoe repair, shoe shops, and stores of similar tenants. These types of retail establishments draw shoppers within a quarter mile trade radius. They are places people would run a Saturday errand.

Food & Beverage (F&B): sit-down restaurants, take-away food, cafes, bars, coffee shops, sandwich shops, ice cream shops, fast food restaurants, and similar types of tenants. Food and Beverage uses are used by local residents, but their draw comes from a bit further, a ½ mile radius.

General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings, and Other (GAFO): clothing stores, furniture stores, discount stores, bookstores, jewelry stores, gift stores, pet supply, home décor stores, music stores, sporting goods stores, craft stores, mattress stores, electronic stores, auto parts stores, hardware stores, and similar types of tenants. GAFO includes all other retail and is the largest category. Retail stores in the GAFO category are usually bigger in size and tend to draw shoppers who make big purchases, but less frequently. Therefore, GAFO draws shoppers outside a one mile trade radius.

Cultural

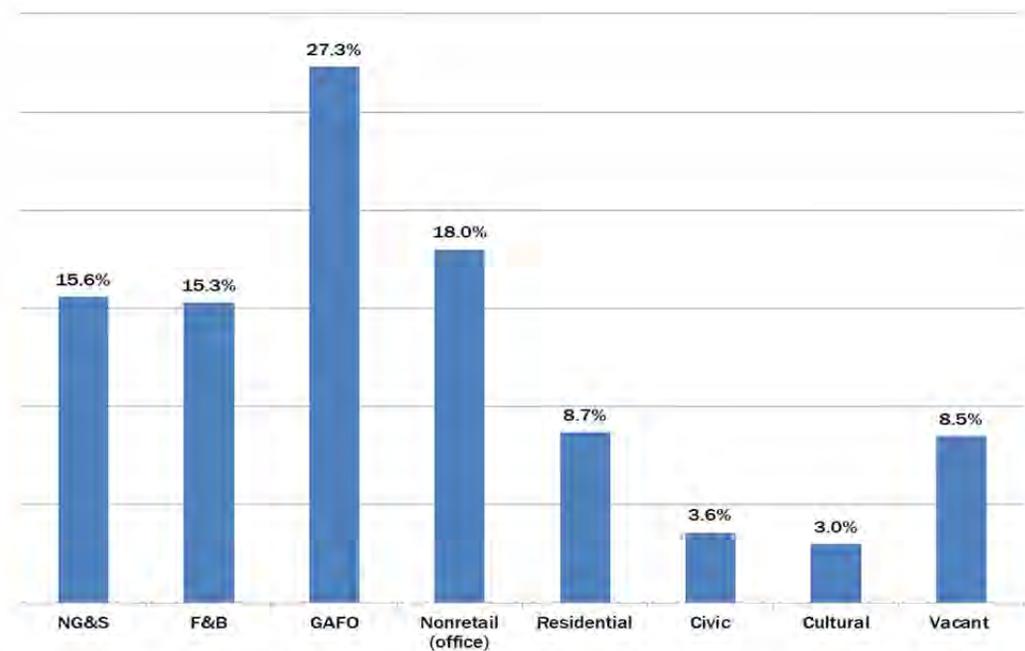
Cultural uses include entertainment activities, such as art galleries, performing arts centers, historic theatres, as well as churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions. Cultural uses provide for a destination apart from retail stores in the downtown and often act as the anchor. Many visitors who are visiting the cultural anchor will also take the time to stop in a retail shop and dine. Cultural uses tend to be nonprofit organizations, thus not contributing to the tax base. Often, they are not required to take part in any assessments that are levied by a Business District Improvement or Merchants Fund. However, if they are dedicated to the community and act as a partner, they will often be willing to make a donation in lieu or contribute in other ways.

Civic

Civic uses include municipal buildings, firehouses, police departments, libraries, or any government offices. Civic uses are the traditional anchor to older retail districts and provide tremendous foot traffic for nearby retail stores. While civic uses do not contribute to the sales in the

downtown, they have an employment base that will be looking to shop and eat during the lunch hour. Many services and food and beverage uses can be supported by civic uses.

Figure 1: Use Mix of 71 Visited Older Suburban Retail Districts



The above chart illustrates the use of downtowns visited. Primary retail (NG&S, F&B, and GAFO) is the largest retail group represented at 58%, followed by nonretail uses. It is important for communities to make nonretail uses vibrant to create a lively, pedestrian-friendly environment. Source: DVRPC, 2013.

Local Stores versus National Chains

National chain stores are often a welcome addition to any downtown, usually acting as an anchor. Chain stores are retail outlets that share a brand and central management with standardized business practices. To be considered a chain, the store must have more than 10 units under the same brand and have a central headquarters; otherwise, it offers franchise contracts. Examples of franchises are Friendly’s Restaurants and Kennedy (Crown) Fried Chicken. Franchises have central headquarters, but are owned and operated by individual proprietors.

There are also local or regional chain stores that are not national. For the purposes of categorizing retail, any store that has more than three locations is considered a local or regional chain (versus national chain with 10 or more stores). A local or regional chain example is A Taste of Olive in West Chester, Ardmore, and Haddonfield, or Pat’s Pizza, located throughout South Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. The remainder of stores is categorized as local, meaning family owned and unique to that particular retail district.

Retail Mix

Achieving the right tenant mix - or even local versus chain - is one element of a retail district’s success, but the primary goal is to ensure that the retail and nonretail uses support both the nearby neighborhood and associated residential demographic. Figure 1 illustrates the general use mix of the 71 retail districts visited. The largest percent is made up of General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings, and Other (GAFO), followed by nonretail (office) uses. Communities should strive to get credit-worthy retail tenants that serve the basic needs and essentials of residents in the immediate neighborhood to fill spaces, such as NG&S, rather than focusing too much on the mix of retail that makes up the district. The demand for a variety of goods and services will balance out.



Taste of Olive in Haddonfield, NJ is a regional chain located in two other downtowns: West Chester, PA, and Ardmore, PA.

What are the Trends Affecting Retail Districts?

By understanding the direction of national and regional retail trends, local leaders and businesses can survive and continue to grow. Below are recent retail trends that many retail districts may be able to build upon.

Baby Boomers

Baby boomers (born 1946-1964) have had a tremendous effect on the retail economy. As they formed households, a large demand was created for goods and furnishings. Often, they “traded up,” buying items of better quality than their parents possessed. However, as they begin to age, they are now beginning to scale back, looking to purchase more moderately priced goods. This is the main market supporting “value retailing,” which includes manufacturers and retailers such as Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, and Costco.

Baby ‘Boomlet’

Since 1989, over four million children have been born every year in the US. This surge in the population, or ‘baby boomlet’, has shown its strength for demands on multimedia – computers, cell phones – as well as children’s clothes and toys.

Affluent Households

Households with incomes over \$75,000 have more discretionary spending power than average and are not impacted the same way by downturns in the economy. Studies have shown that clothing purchases for affluent households are considerably above average, as well as home remodeling and improvement products. Affluent empty nesters tend to spend more on travel.

Ethnic Diversity

Foreign-born residents and their American-born children are becoming an increasingly powerful economic force, creating opportunity and challenges for development and retail markets. For example, the Latino and Asian populations have grown throughout the region, providing new demands on the retail markets. Local economic development agencies can tell prospective retailers how a neighborhood is changing, thereby attracting stores that meet the community’s market demands. The foreign-born population is also more likely to start their own business than their American-born cohorts.

Downtown retail districts also have an opportunity to capitalize on several recent development trends. They include:

Walkable Communities

The National Association of Realtors’ 2011 Community Preference Survey revealed that Americans would like to live in walkable communities, where shops, restaurants, and local goods and services are within an easy stroll from their homes, and their jobs are a short commute away, as long as those communities can also provide privacy from neighbors and detached, single-family homes.

At the same time, many developers are switching from developing typical suburban strip centers to urbanized locations with high foot traffic and are transit accessible. They are building up rather than out. Many developers are now willing to work around various issues that downtown locations present.

In addition, historically, retailers were more interested in immediate available space and less interested in the market that traditional downtowns offered. Now, retailers look for downtowns that can provide an existing strong customer base, as well as attractive streetscapes and facades. This provides additional exposure for their storefronts and accesses a different shopping population.

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse creates a new retail environment within existing buildings. It provides for preservation and eliminates the need for demolition or land assembly. In most circumstances, adaptive reuse of buildings is cheaper than new construction in older communities.

“Experience Shopping”

Experience shopping includes shopping areas with restaurants, carnival rides, performers, and national chain stores. Today’s shopping experience is often outside. Some communities are reinventing their closed shopping malls into outdoor centers; however, traditional downtowns have been utilizing this pattern since they were established.

Market for Smaller Offices

Recent trends in office space have curtailed the demand for large amounts of office space. Companies have downsized due to telecommunications. On average, companies have reduced the space needed for workers from 250 square feet to 175 square feet. More than ever, companies are looking for space that can provide their employees with a better quality of work life and transit options.



The vibrancy of downtown Kennett Square, PA, takes advantage of the small office market and adaptive reuse trends. The photo on top shows the Market at Liberty Place. The market is an indoor farmers market housed in a building previously used during WWII to disassemble ships. The market offers food and wine and is a great meeting place for lunch and dinner. The photo on bottom illustrates the headquarters for Genesis, an elderly care company. Built without a cafeteria, all 600 employees are encouraged to visit the downtown eateries for shopping and lunch options.

Policies that Impede Downtown Retail Revitalization

- ✦ Constructing ring roads/bypasses
- ✦ Creating pedestrian only zones and parking in remote lots
- ✦ Relocating municipal functions away from downtown
- ✦ Removing on-street parking
- ✦ Creating one-way streets
- ✦ Losing a key retailer
- ✦ Opening of new shopping center
- ✦ Not addressing petty crime
- ✦ Failing to maintain the public realm
- ✦ Refusing national retailers/discount department stores

Source: Streetsense, 2012.

Niche Retail

A niche is a special segment of the market well-situated for dealing with the competitive nature of retail. Most successful downtowns have been built upon the strengths of two or three economic niches. They are often based on a specialization and work best when it is unique, offering little or no outside competition. Niche retail is often a strong component of downtowns that have a traditional, historic urban form.

A downtown niche can provide growth potential and be used as an effective business recruitment tool. The existence of a niche demonstrates to potential related retailers that there is already a proven level of customer traffic and expenditures. Often, downtown businesses do not realize they have the basis of a niche. Documenting the existing businesses will enable a community to evaluate whether a niche may already exist. Niche economies can be goods and services-based or consumer-based. Goods and service based niches include antiques, specialty food chains (A Taste of Olive), and arts and entertainment activities such as theatre, dance, art galleries or museums. Consumer-based niches include ethnic groups, tourism, or office workers. Accounting for a majority of this nation's population growth, African Americans, Asians, and Latinos are now important segments for retailers with tremendous spending power.

Tourism is important but not for every downtown. Lastly, the office market is continually changing. With more businesses offering telecommuting, there is less demand for Class A office space. However, businesses that do require space often seek areas that are transit accessible and offer their employees shopping and dining in close proximity. This is particularly important when capturing the lunch time business of nearby workers at local food and beverage establishments.

Having identified an existing niche or potential niche does not mean it will be effective. A proper market assessment, measuring the supply and demand, should be completed. In this case, household expenditures are important, as many shoppers will buy niche products once the essential goods and services have been purchased. Having suitable commercial space is also important. What may be appropriate for one niche may be entirely unsuitable for another. For instance, artists need large spaces of at least 5,000 square feet, whereas antique retailers may prefer historic homes, such as in Mullica Hill, New Jersey. Finally, evaluate the population in the core trade area. Residents in the immediate neighborhood may come downtown frequently to visit professional offices and business services, but may not have the discretionary dollars to buy at niche retailers.



Historic Mullica Hill in Harrison Township, NJ, built a retail niche around historic homes and antiques.



Collingswood, NJ, has revitalized their downtown with a variety of restaurant options in terms of cuisine and outdoor seating.

Chapter Two: Evaluating Suburban Retail Districts in Greater Philadelphia

Retail in the small towns across the United States does not follow the same formula. Retail districts face a variety of challenges, and the success of one street cannot be easily replicated. In the Greater Philadelphia region, many older suburban retail districts are either no longer supported by the market conditions or they have not evolved to address changes in population and income. In order for these retail districts to thrive and be successful, it is important to understand the evolution of retail and the building blocks that successful streets have in common.

Greater Philadelphia communities analyzed include those categorized as an older suburb/mature in *Connections 2040*. These criteria provided over 100 “traditional” suburban downtowns to evaluate. Field work was performed to collect information on various elements, including zoning, infrastructure, retail mix, signs, open space, pedestrian/vehicle counts, management structure, historic properties, retail anchor, vacancy rate, Walk Score, and transit accessibility.

Demographic information was then pulled from the Census about population within a quarter mile, the number of households within a half mile, and median household income within a half mile. This information enabled a comparison of all districts and defined which elements were present or lacking in suburban retail districts throughout the region. Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis, 71 retail districts were included for a more detailed analysis, as shown in Figure 2.

Once the retail districts were chosen, the boundaries for each retail district were drawn. Since there often are no defined boundaries of a central business district, it is about perception and the feeling exuded from a particular community. Instinctively, the retail district contains taller buildings, higher density, transportation nodes, and a large number of pedestrians on the street. Retail districts can be defined by natural or manmade borders, such as bodies of water, rail tracks, topography, or roadways.



Greater Philadelphia is home to many colleges and universities. Glassboro, NJ and Swarthmore, PA are both revitalizing their downtown retail to serve the nearby college population. Glassboro, NJ (above) is currently linking its old downtown on Main Street with new construction along Rowan Boulevard at Rowan University. Downtown Glassboro is advertising new shopping options along High Street. Shown below is Park Avenue in downtown Swarthmore, PA, which is home to many different shops, the community library, and the train station. Park Avenue is within walking distance of Swarthmore College.

Essentially, the CBD is what people think of when they think of a community's downtown area. For the purposes of this study, boundary lines were drawn at natural barriers or in areas where residential uses began to dominate the street front.

Table 1 outlines the common retail district elements found in all 71 retail districts and assigns a priority level of how relevant they are to the success of the district. Elements found to have high relevance are not necessarily the *only* elements that will contribute to the success of a retail district. These seven elements have been categorized as high: BID/Merchants Association, sidewalk width, high Walk Score, vacancy rate, parking options, anchored, and high traffic counts (AADTS). These are important criteria that retailers study before making a location decision and should be the focus of a downtown retail strategy.

Elements categorized as medium relevance include streetscape design, local versus national tenant mix, lease rents, historic districts, household income, transit accessibility, residential population and events and programming. Population and household income may not be able to change quickly but the other physical

elements categorized as medium can be addressed in the short term. Streetscape design and events may bring more people to the downtown, but they need a place to shop and visit first.

Finally, elements categorized as low relevance include open space, the retail mix, and number of blocks. Open space is usually included in site requirements, while the number of blocks and retail mix do not require immediate attention when embarking on an overall revitalization of the district. The number of blocks and retail mix should be included in the long-term strategy for the community and require further analysis and time.

The following pages highlight ten great older retail districts that exhibited all seven high relevant elements, as well as medium relevant elements. They include: Bordentown City, Bryn Mawr, Collingswood, Doylestown Borough, Downingtown, Haddonfield, Kennett Square, Media, Princeton, and West Chester. (All data on the 71 districts are available at www.dvrpc.org/sos).



Above, Bordentown City, NJ, has reused previous residential buildings as storefronts. Below, Primo Hoagies takes space inside an old mill in downtown Downingtown, PA, adding to Chester County's rural charm.

Table 1: Retail Elements and Priority

BID/Merchants Association	H	Management is vital to the success of a retail district. Only 12.5 percent of the retail districts visited employs a management structure. Most of the districts do have volunteer associations or nonprofit organizations representing all the businesses.
Sidewalk Width	H	Sidewalks on model retail districts are sized to accommodate customer traffic. Sidewalks are as narrow as eight feet, and as wide as 20 feet. Two retail districts - Princeton and Haddonfield - draw regional customers and have significantly wider sidewalks, with 15 and 20 feet respectively. Average widths are 8.5 feet for districts visited.
High Walk Score®	H	Most successful districts have a Walk Score over 80. Walk Score® (www.walkscore.com) measures walkability on a scale of 0-100 based on walking routes to destinations such as grocery stores, schools, parks, restaurants, and retail.
Vacancy Rate	H	An attractive retail district will have less than a 20 percent vacancy rate (nonretail uses should be below 10 percent). The average vacancy rate for the 71 retail districts visited is 8.5 percent.
Parking Options	H	Parking availability is an issue for suburban small-scale shopping districts. Parking options varied across the retail districts visited.
Anchored	H	Anchors included for this study include civic or cultural anchors. Large anchors help bring in foot traffic to downtown businesses. Only three percent of the retail districts visited have a civic or cultural anchor.
Average Daily Traffic Counts	H	Traffic volume is needed to bring customers, but too much may disrupt visibility and accessibility. Successful districts see an average of 10,000-16,000 vehicles per day. Upper Darby has over 20,000 vehicles per day.
Streetscape Design	M	Of the retail districts visited, at least two thirds had streetscape standards.
Local Tenants vs. National Chains	M	Small-scale retail districts are overwhelmingly occupied by local and regional tenants. Almost all the retail districts visited have over 90 percent of local tenants.
Lease rents	M	Lease rents for small-scale retail districts range from \$13 to \$25 per square foot.
Historic District	M	Approximately 1/3 (25 of 71) of the retail districts visited contained a designated historic district or buildings. Historic districts may add to the unification of a district but will not make the district successful alone.
Household Income	M	Median household income provides information about the population's discretionary spending. The average median household income for the retail districts visited is approximately \$60,000. Household incomes in the 71 districts range from \$24,000 to \$129,000.
Transit Accessibility	M	Transit accessibility is important if the retail district has businesses that rely solely on foot traffic. Of the retail districts visited, 52 percent have a rail station, and 92 percent have bus service.
Residential Population	M	Surrounding residential population is important to support most goods and services offered in small-scale suburban retail districts. Most of the districts have less than 10,000 persons within a half mile radius. Collingswood and West Chester are surrounded by almost 15,000 persons within a half mile radius.
Events/Programming	M	Yearly events and programming provide opportunities to bring additional visitors to the downtown. Promotion of these events is critical.
Open Space	L	A majority of the retail districts visited did not have open spaces (parklets, plazas) within the district. Street trees and other landscaping were present.
Retail Mix	L	In the retail districts visited, General Merchandise, Apparel, Furniture, and Other (GAFO) retail uses were most prevalent. Most districts have retail mixes that are evenly distributed among all three categories. However, among the visited districts, nonretail (office) uses constitute 18 percent of the retail space.
Number of Blocks in Length	L	Retail districts range in length from one block to 12 blocks. Right-sizing the retail district is important for its success.

Source: DVRPC, 2013

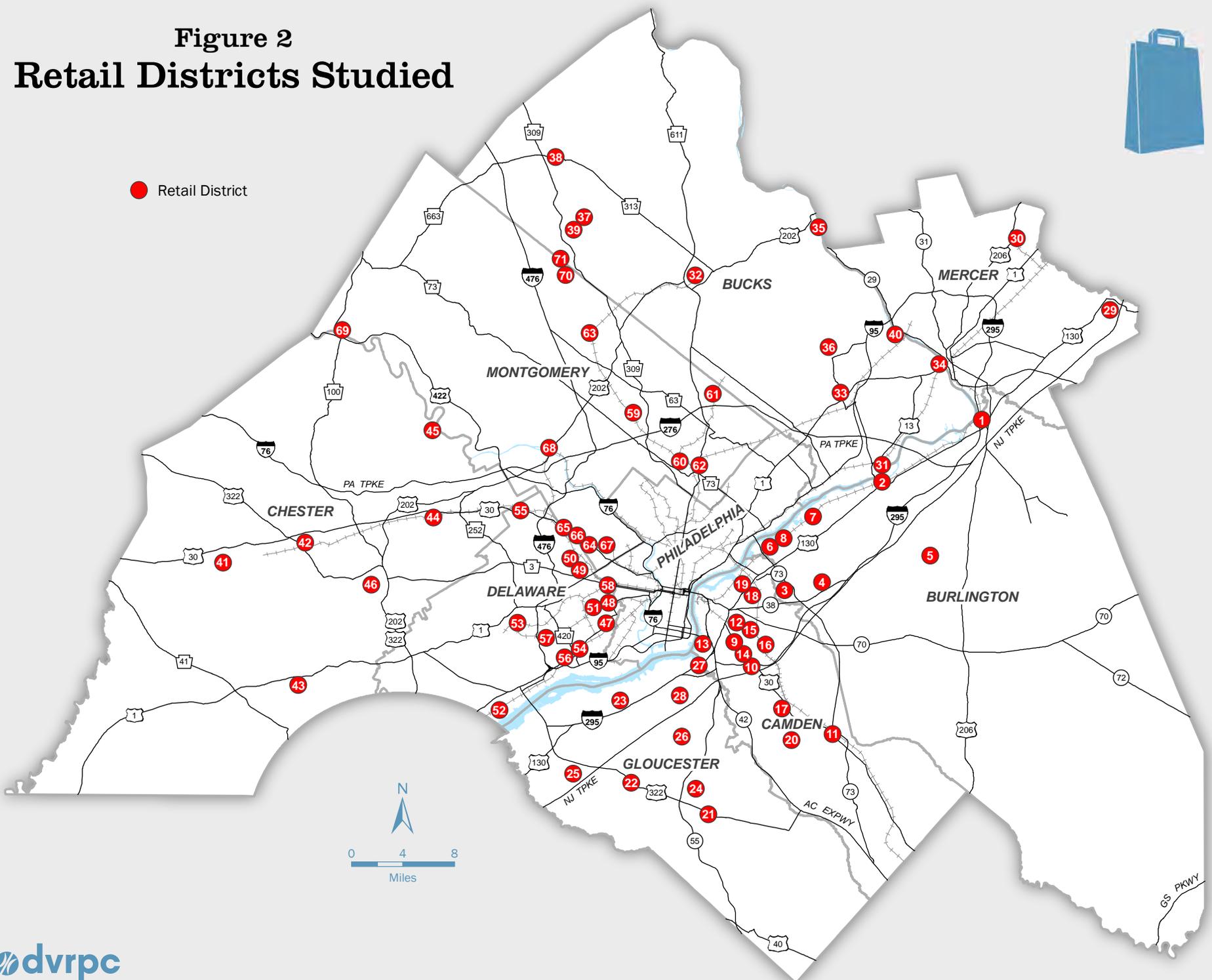
Map Number	Retail District	Cross Streets
1	Bordentown City	Farnsworth Ave. (CR 545) / Crosswicks St. (CR 528)
2	Burlington City	High St. / Broad St.
3	Maple Shade Township	Main St. (CR 537) / Forklanding Rd.
4	Moorestown Township	Main St. (CR 537) / Mill St.
5	Mount Holly Township	High St. / Mill St. (CR 537)
6	Palmyra Borough	Broad St. (CR 543) / Cinnaminson Ave. (CR 607)
7	Riverside Township	S. Pavilion Ave. / Scott St. (CR 613)
8	Riverton Borough	Broad St. (CR 543) / Main St. (CR 603)
9	Audubon Borough (Merchant St.)	Merchant St. / Oakland Ave.
10	Barrington Borough	Clements Bridge Rd. (NJ 41) / Trenton Ave.
11	Berlin Borough	White Horse Pike (US 30) / Broad St.
12	Collingswood Borough	Haddon Ave. (CR 630) / Collings Ave. (CR 561)
13	Gloucester City	Broadway (CR 551) / Market St. (CR 634)
14	Haddon Heights Borough	Station Ave. (CR 656) / Atlantic Ave. (CR 727)
15	Haddon Township (Westmont)	Haddon Ave. (CR 561) / Crystal Lake Rd. (CR 643)
16	Haddonfield Borough	Kings Highway (NJ41) / Haddon Ave. (CR 561)
17	Laurel Springs Borough	Atlantic Ave. (CR 727) / Stone Rd. (CR 669)
18	Merchantville Borough	Maple Ave. (CR 662) / Center St. (CR 537)
19	Pennsauken Township	Westfield Ave. (CR 610) / Browning Rd. (CR 612)
20	Pine Hill Borough	Erial Rd. (CR 703) / Branch Ave. (CR 687)
21	Glassboro Borough	High St. (CR 641) / Main St. (CR 553)
22	Harrison Township (Mullica Hill)	N. Main St. (NJ 45) / Bridgeport-Mullica Hill Rd. (US 322)
23	Paulsboro Borough	E. Broad St. (NJ 44) / Delaware St. (CR 667)
24	Pitman Borough	Broadway Ave. (CR 553) / Holly Ave. (CR 624)
25	Swedesboro Borough	Kings Highway (CR 551) / Railroad Ave.
26	Wenonah Borough	West St. / Mantua Ave. (CR 632)
27	Westville Borough	Broadway (CR 551) / Pine St.
28	Woodbury City	Broad St. (NJ 45) / Delaware St. (CR 640)
29	Hightstown Borough	Main St. (NJ 33) / Stockton St. (CR 571)
30	Princeton	Nassau St. (NJ 27) / Witherspoon St.
31	Bristol Borough	Mill St. / Radcliffe St.
32	Doylestown Borough	State St. (US 202) / Main St.
33	Langhorne Borough	Maple St. (PA 213) / Bellevue Ave.
34	Morrisville Borough	W. Bridge St. (PA 32) / Pennsylvania Ave.
35	New Hope Borough	Main St. (PA 32) / Bridge St. (PA 179)
36	Newtown Borough	State St. / Washington Ave.

Map Number	Retail District	Cross Streets
37	Perkasie Borough	W. Market St. / S. 6th St.
38	Quakertown Borough	W. Broad St. (PA 313) / 3rd St.
39	Sellersville Borough	N. Main St. / Maple Ave.
40	Yardley Borough	Main St. / Afton Ave. (PA 332)
41	Coatesville City	E. Lincoln Highway (US 30 Business) / 2nd Ave.
42	Downingtown Borough	E. Lancaster Ave. (US 30 Business) / Beech St.
43	Kennett Square Borough	Baltimore Pike / Union St. (PA 82)
44	Malvern Borough	King St. / Warren Ave.
45	Phoenixville Borough	Bridge St. (PA 113) / Main St.
46	West Chester Borough	Gay St. (PA 3) / High St. (PA 100)
47	Darby Borough	Main St. / Powell Rd.
48	East Lansdowne Borough	Baltimore Pike / Penn Blvd.
49	Haverford Township (Brookline)	Darby Rd. / Brookline Blvd.
50	Haverford Township (Oakmont)	Darby Rd. / Campbell Ave.
51	Lansdowne Borough	Lansdowne St. / Baltimore Ave.
52	Marcus Hook Borough	Market St. (PA 452) / 10th St. (US 13)
53	Media Borough	State St. / S. Jackson St.
54	Norwood Borough	Winona Ave. / Chester Pike (US 13)
55	Radnor Township (Wayne)	Lancaster Ave. (US 30) / Wayne Ave.
56	Ridley Park Borough	E. Hinckley Ave. / E. Sellers Ave.
57	Swarthmore Borough	N. Chester Rd. / Park Ave.
58	Upper Darby Township	Market St. (PA 3) / S. 69th St.
59	Ambler Borough	Butler Ave. / Main St.
60	Cheltenham Township (Glenside)	S. Easton Rd. / Glenside Ave.
61	Hatboro Borough	S. York Rd. (PA 263) / E. Moreland Rd.
62	Jenkintown Borough	Old York Rd. (PA 611) / West Ave.
63	Lansdale Borough	Main St. (PA 63) / Susquehanna Ave.
64	Lower Merion Township (Ardmore)	Lancaster Ave. (US 30) / Anderson Ave.
65	Lower Merion Township (Bryn Mawr)	Lancaster Ave. (US 30) / Merion Ave.
66	Lower Merion Township (Haverford)	Lancaster Ave. (US 30) / Haverford Station Rd.
67	Narberth Borough	Narberth Ave. / Haverford Ave.
68	Norristown Borough	Main St. / Swede St.
69	Pottstown Borough	E. High St. (PA 663) / Hanover St.
70	Souderton Borough	N. Main St. (PA 113) / Chestnut St.
71	Telford Borough	N. Main St. / W. Broad St.

Figure 2 Retail Districts Studied



● Retail District



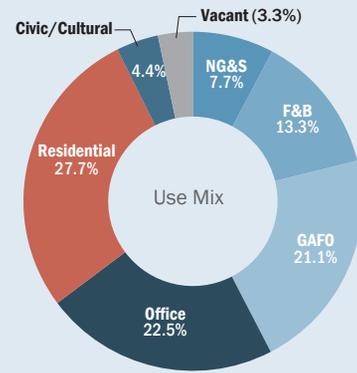


Bordentown City

BURLINGTON COUNTY, NJ



i Bordentown City is located on the NJ Transit's RiverLINE, connecting the downtown district to Trenton and Philadelphia.



Management: Downtown Bordentown Association (www.downtownbordentown.com)

Sidewalk Width: 10 feet

Walk Score: 69

Parking Options: metered street parking, public parking lots

Anchored: Borough Hall, Fire, Elementary School, and Police

Population within 1/2 mile: 3,395

Median Household Income within 1/4 mile: \$66,222

Number of Blocks in Study Area: 10

The core of Bordentown's business district is concentrated on Farnsworth Avenue and Crosswicks Street, and is easily accessible via Route 130 and I-295. Businesses include art galleries, bookshops, antiques shops, a vintage record shop, as well as several restaurants and professional offices. Downtown Bordentown has a lively adjacent residential neighborhood. The Downtown Association sponsors two annual events in the spring and fall which bring in new visitors.



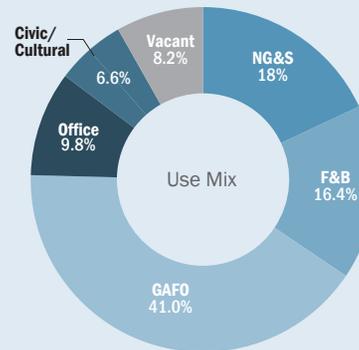


Bryn Mawr

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA



i Bryn Mawr's retail district is one of three identified districts located in Lower Merion Township. Of the three, Bryn Mawr has the lowest percentage of office uses (9.8%) and the highest percentage of cultural uses (3.3%).



Management: Bryn Mawr Beautiful Foundation; Bryn Mawr Business Association (www.brynmawrpa.org/bmba)

Sidewalk Width: 10 feet

Walk Score: 98

Parking Options: metered street parking, public parking lots

Anchored: Bryn Mawr Film Institute (cultural)

Population within ½ mile: 5,997

Median Household Income within ¼ mile: \$51,977

Number of Blocks in Study Area: 6

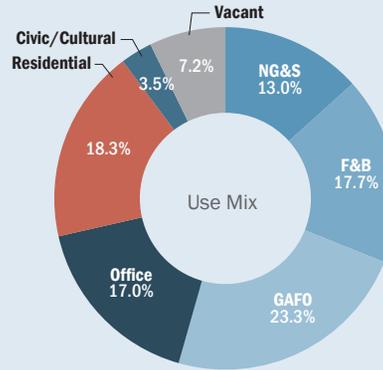
Situated along Lancaster Avenue on the Main Line, Bryn Mawr is a thriving business district. Sprinkled throughout this neighborhood shopping district are offices, services, and charming boutique stores. The Bryn Mawr retail district is located within a quarter-mile of the Bryn Mawr train station, and enjoys a ballooning core trade area population when area colleges – Bryn Mawr and Haverford – are in session. The Bryn Mawr retail district receives high volumes of traffic during the day but competition is fierce with two other retail districts within walking distance.





Collingswood

CAMDEN COUNTY, NJ



Management: Collingswood Partners, Collingswood Business Association (collingswood.com/shopping/collingswood-partners)

Sidewalk Width: 8 feet

Walk Score: 91

Parking Options: kiosk street parking, public parking lots

Anchored: Borough Hall, PATCO station

Population within 1/2 mile: 14,686

Median Household Income within 1/4 mile: \$ 68,292

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 21

Located along the PATCO High Speed Line, Collingswood's revitalized Haddon Avenue Business District offers a full array of boutique shops, restaurants, professional offices, and cultural entertainment. Collingswood is within a 10 minute PATCO ride to Philadelphia and offers new housing options directly next to the train station at the LumberYard. Collingswood hosts a variety of events throughout the year to bring in visitors. At 21 blocks, it is one of the largest shopping districts.

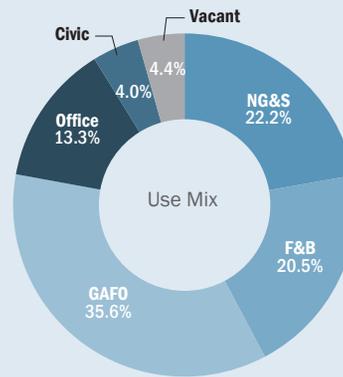
i To encourage local shopping, Collingswood Partners Inc. runs the Collingswood Cash program (money only to be spent at Collingswood retailers and restaurants). Shoppers that purchase \$50 in Collingswood Cash will receive an additional \$20 to spend anywhere in town.





Downingtown

CHESTER COUNTY, PA



Management: Downingtown Main Street Association (www.downingtownmainstreet.com)

Sidewalk Width: 10 feet

Walk Score: 74

Parking Options: free street parking, public parking lots

Anchored: Borough Hall

Population within ½ mile: 3,910

Median Household Income within ¼ mile: \$49,733

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 6

Downingtown Main Street Association was incorporated to bring citizens, residents, property owners, business owners, and the private sector together to address major issues confronting the borough. DMSA became inactive in 2005 but due to the energy of local businesses and residents, the DMSA was restarted in 2011. Downtown Downingtown has over 78 percent retail uses with nearly half of them general merchandise, apparel and accessories, furniture, and other sales (GAFO). Downingtown holds traditional events throughout the year to bring in new visitors.

i Downingtown boasts a “produce only” farmer’s market, where every vendor must grow, raise or make what they sell. Taking advantage of their agricultural location, every farmer and market vendor is located within a 50 mile radius of Downingtown.



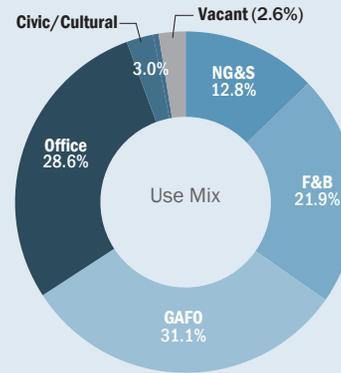


Doylestown

BUCKS COUNTY, PA



i Doylestown was voted one of Money magazine's 100 Best Places to Live in 2007.



Management: Doylestown Business & Community Alliance (www.doylestownalliance.org)

Sidewalk Width: 9 feet

Walk Score: 88

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots

Anchored: Cultural District

Population within ½ mile: 5,904

Median Household Income within ¼ mile: \$73,316

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 19

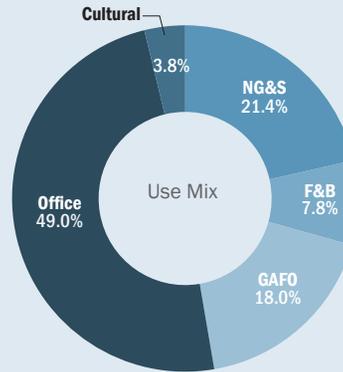
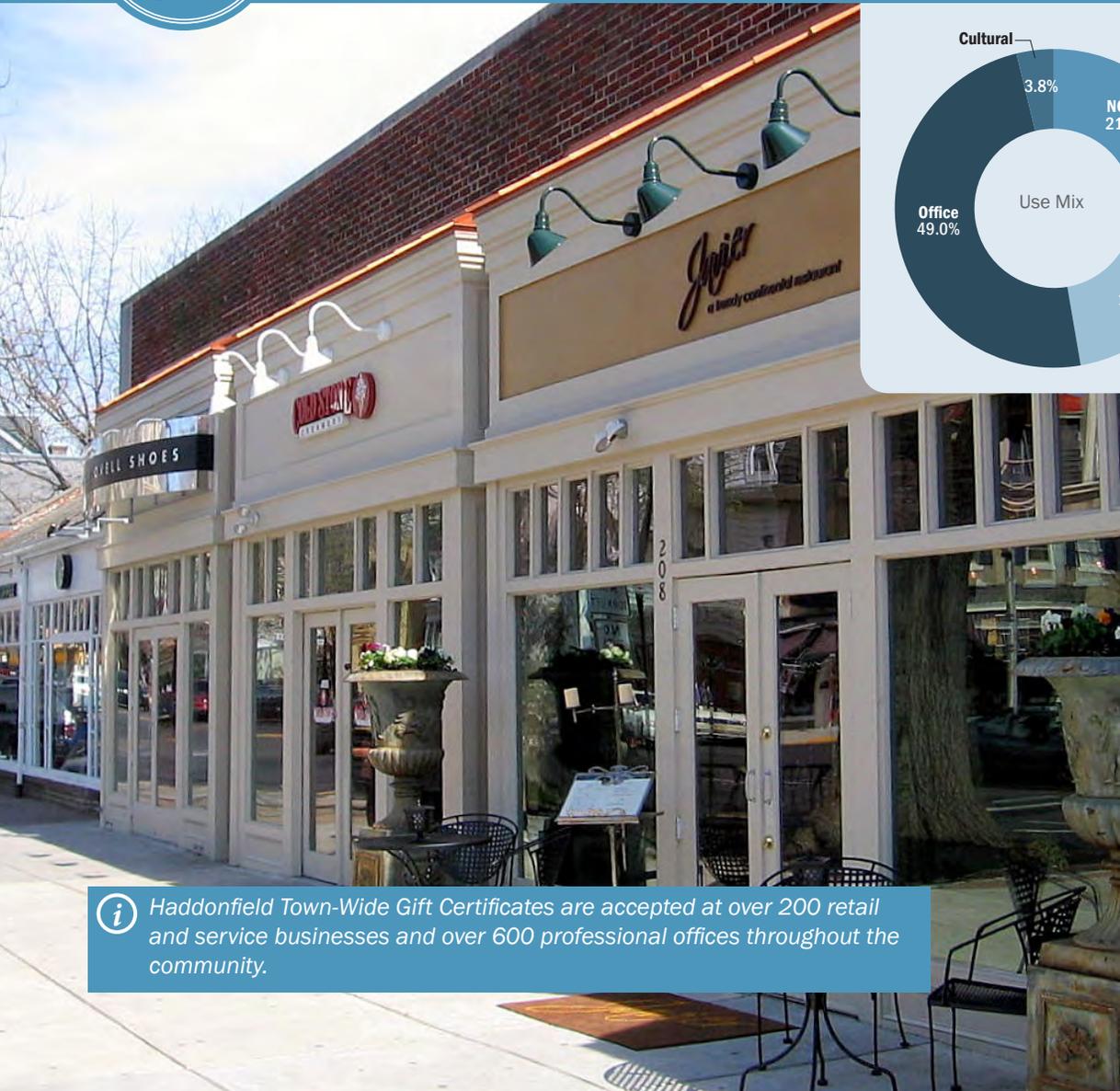
Located on a hilltop twenty-seven miles north of Philadelphia, Doylestown is the vibrant county seat of Bucks County. The intersection of Main and State Streets has been an important retail hub since the 1750s. Doylestown is blessed with numerous assets that help generate foot traffic in downtown, including the Bucks County Court House, the County Theater, a SEPTA regional rail station, and the Cultural District. Downtown Doylestown has a great deal of specialty shops and restaurants, which make it a great place to be during the day and into the evening. Doylestown's 19 blocks represent one of the largest retail districts included in the study. Its large number of office uses supports the large number of eateries.





Haddonfield

CAMDEN COUNTY, NJ



Management: Partnership for Haddonfield (www.haddonfieldprofessionals.org)

Sidewalk Width: 20 feet

Walk Score: 77

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots

Anchored: Borough Hall, PATCO station

Population within ½ mile: 7,056

Median Household Income within ¼ mile: \$126,386

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 14

Located within walking distance of the PATCO High Speed Line, Haddonfield has a bustling downtown filled with an array of shops. From salons and flower shops to cafes and specialty stores, Haddonfield has a diverse mix of retailers that keep shoppers coming back. The retail shops line Kings Highway, Haddon Avenue, and Tanner Street with branded wayfinding signage to direct shoppers. Haddonfield has an historic fabric that leads the district to be unified with only a minimal number of chain retailers. Downtown also has various office uses for doctors, lawyers, and architects. Nonretail uses make up 49 percent of the street while traditional retail accounts for 47 percent. At the time of the field work, downtown Haddonfield had less than one percent vacancy.

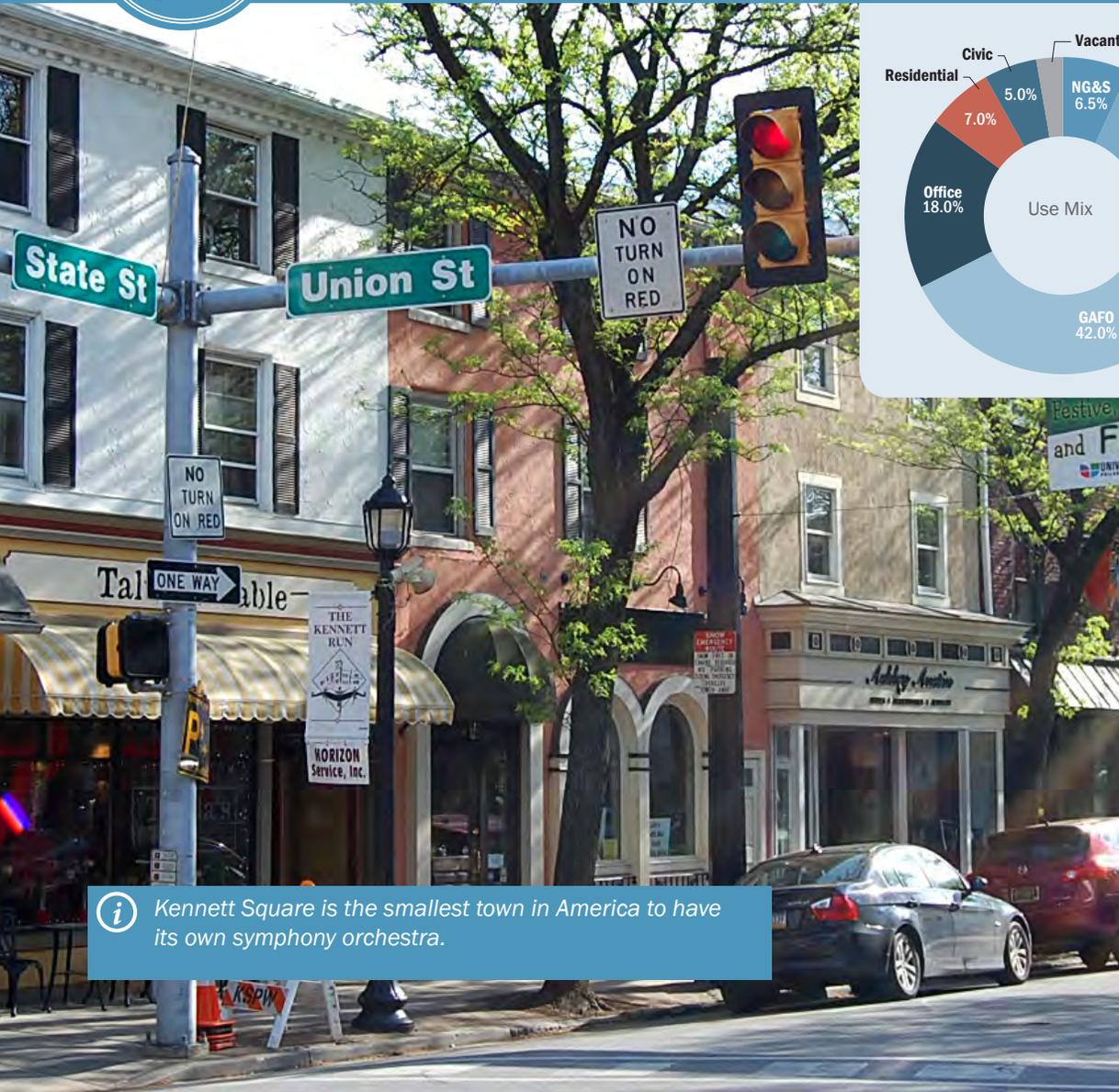
i Haddonfield Town-Wide Gift Certificates are accepted at over 200 retail and service businesses and over 600 professional offices throughout the community.



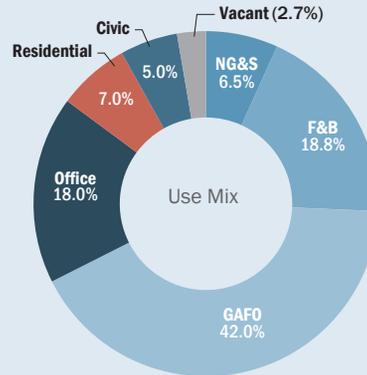


Kennett Square

CHESTER COUNTY, PA



i Kennett Square is the smallest town in America to have its own symphony orchestra.



Management: Historic Kennett Square Inc. (www.historickennettsquare.com)

Sidewalk Width: 10 feet

Walk Score: 82

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots, and structured parking

Anchored: Historic Sites

Population within 1/2 mile: 4,501

Median Household Income within 1/4 mile: \$61,758

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 9

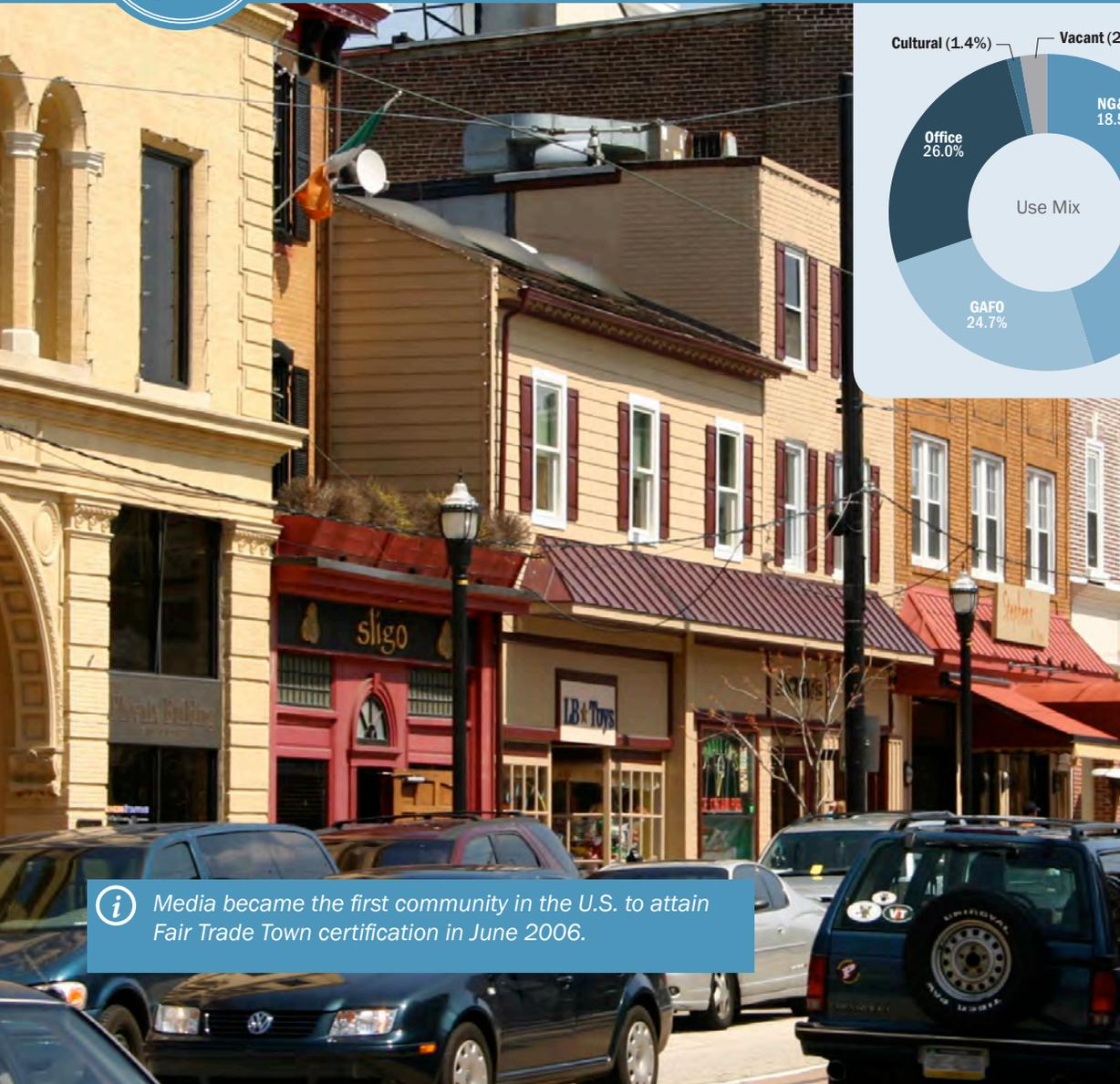
Good things come in small packages. The quaint small town of Kennett Square, known as the Mushroom Capital of the World, is located in the Brandywine Valley in Chester County. From antiques to clothing and books to gifts, Kennett Square has it all. Known for the famous Talula's Table Restaurant, historic Kennett is surrounded by a rural landscape, home to mushroom farms. The retail shops account for 68 percent of the uses in the district; the highest category is GAFO. Kennett Square hosts many events throughout the year, making it a destination for residents and tourists.



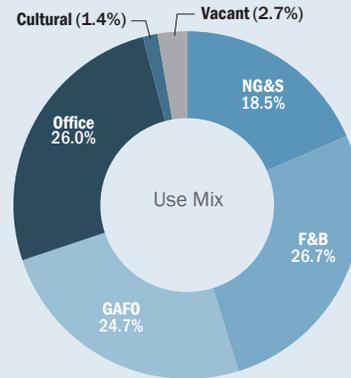


Media

DELAWARE COUNTY, PA



i Media became the first community in the U.S. to attain Fair Trade Town certification in June 2006.



Management: Media Business Authority (MBA)
(www.mediabusinessauthority.com)

Sidewalk Width: 10 feet

Walk Score: 95

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots, and structured parking

Anchored: County Courthouse Complex

Population within 1/2 mile: 6,735

Median Household Income within 1/4 mile: \$54,617

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 14

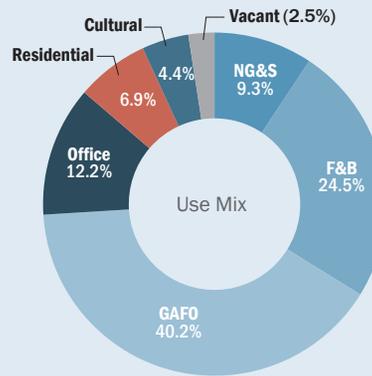
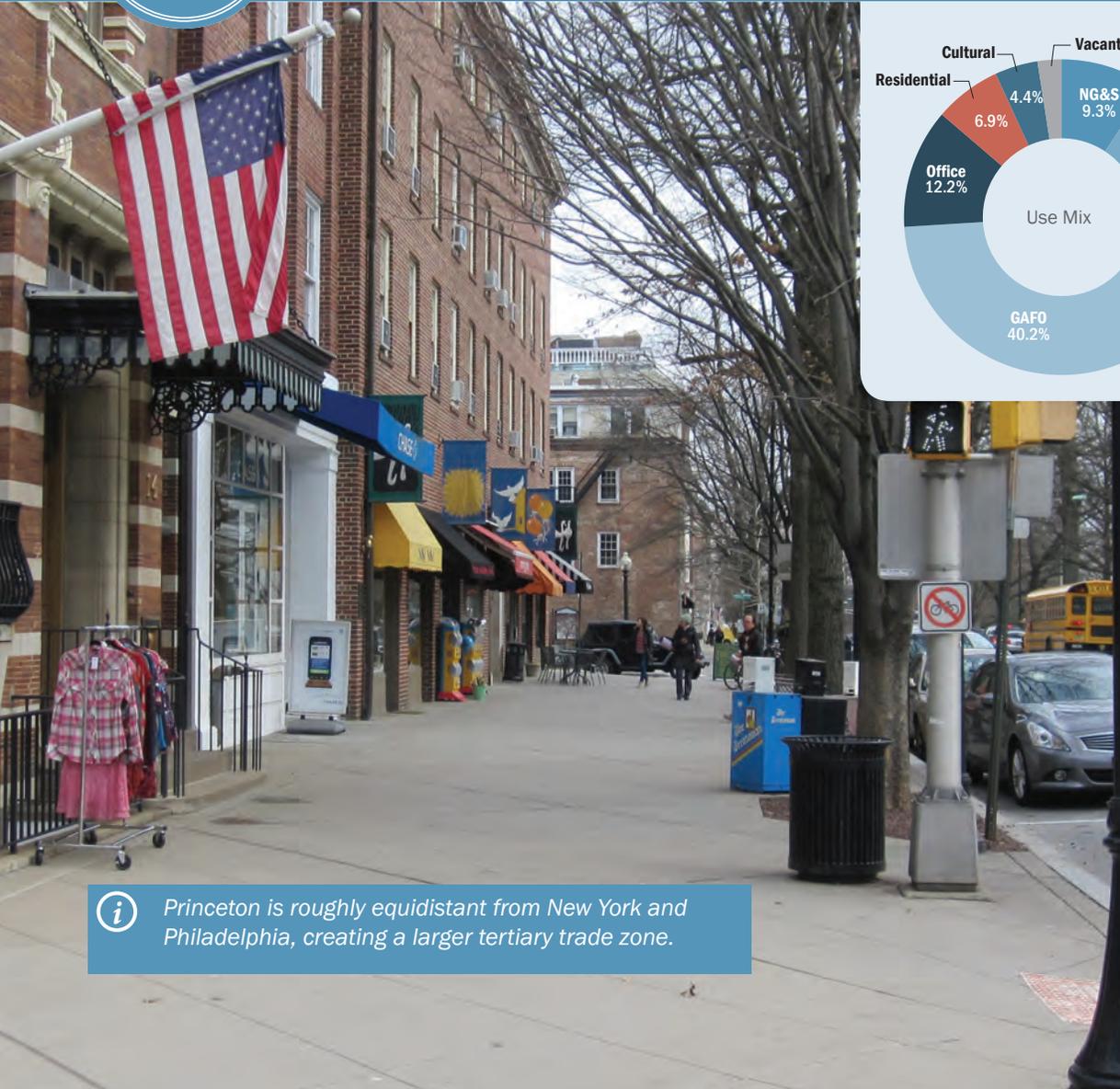
State Street is Media's bustling main street. Though less than one square mile in size, Media is served by SEPTA regional rail and the 101 Trolley, and is the county seat. During the week, the County Courthouse brings in over 300,000 visitors and employees to Media during normal business hours, many of whom shop and dine while they are in town. In addition to stores and professional offices, there are several parks, schools, playgrounds, houses of worship, community centers, and entertainment venues on or within walking distance of State Street. Media is a diverse and inclusive place. From street festivals to live music to a performance theater to poetry readings, State Street offers entertainment for all ages.





Princeton

MERCER COUNTY, NJ



Management: Palmer Square Management Inc. (only Palmer Square) (www.palmersquare.com)

Sidewalk Width: 15 feet

Walk Score: 97

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots, and structured parking

Anchored: Princeton University

Population within 1/2 mile: 10,575

Median Household Income within 1/4 mile: \$126,811

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 10

Located across from Princeton University in the heart of downtown Princeton, Palmer Square and the surrounding retail area offers a unique collection of residences, shopping, and dining. Streets lined with classic architecture are mixed with contemporary elements that complement the architecture of Princeton University. From apparel to home furnishings and specialty food and drink, downtown Princeton also hosts many seasonal events throughout the year.

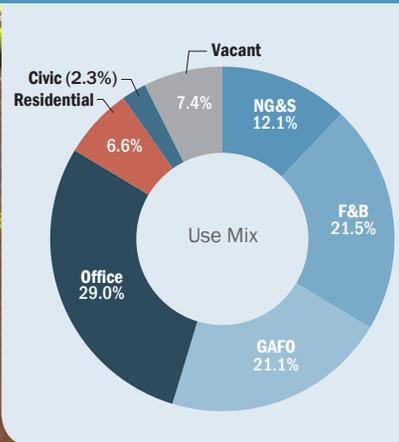
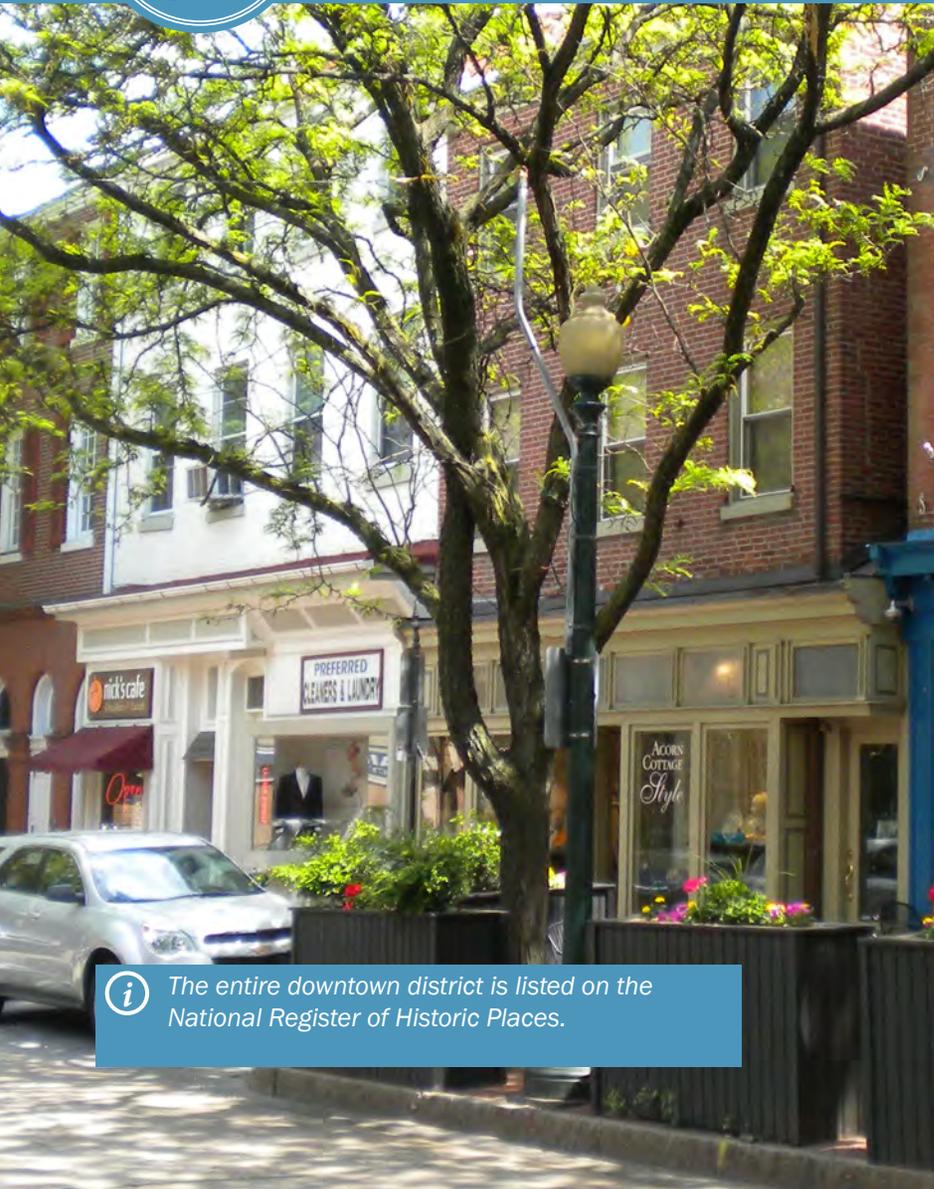
Downtown Princeton's retail mix is largely GAFO followed by F&B. Only 9 percent of the retail mix serves the neighborhood's goods and services needs. Because of the high amount of discretionary income in the surrounding trade area, downtown retailers can specialize in items that customers will drive further distances to purchase, often in the GAFO category. Princeton has a very high Walk Score of 97.

i Princeton is roughly equidistant from New York and Philadelphia, creating a larger tertiary trade zone.



West Chester

CHESTER COUNTY, PA



Management: West Chester Business Improvement District (www.wcbid.com)

Sidewalk Width: 12 feet

Walk Score: 89

Parking Options: metered street parking, park for fee lots, and structured parking

Anchored: West Chester University

Population within ½ mile: 13,642

Median Household Income within ¼ mile: \$41,807

No. of Blocks in Study Area: 10

The Borough of West Chester has small town charm with bigger town amenities. Downtown West Chester is home to West Chester University and receives many tourists from throughout the state visiting the historic sites in and around the Brandywine Valley. Downtown has a variety of restaurants, boutique shops, professional offices and residential options. West Chester recently added a new hotel and downtown lofts.

Because West Chester is the county seat, it has a high number of office uses that support the variety of eateries located in the Borough. Food and beverage (F&B) account for 21 percent of the uses frequented by the high population of daytime workers and the university population. West Chester has no passenger rail service but has invested in a new bus depot in order to provide an alternative mode of transportation to the Borough.

i The entire downtown district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chapter Three: Applying the Characteristics of Successful Retail Districts

Building from the elements that have high relevance to retailers, this section highlights each of the seven elements and provides strategies for communities to undertake. They include (in order of importance): Managed, retail-appropriate, pedestrian-friendly, parking options, unified, transit-accessible, and programmed. Each element provides an explanation and both short-term and long-term solutions.



Managed

Does your retail district have clear leadership and management with support from a BID, merchants association, or retail recruiter? Is there a single point of contact for efficiency and clarity for all parties?



Unified

Does your downtown have a common character or theme, often historic in nature, which serves to unify the retailers within the district?



Retail-Appropriate

Do the retail spaces include storefronts that are at least 20 feet wide, have transparent windows, sidewalks at least eight feet wide, and few disruptions (i.e., offices, open space, or residential)?



Transit-Accessible

Does your retail district have transit options close to retail shops and restaurants?



Pedestrian-Friendly

Does your retail district provide a walkable and *perceived* safe environment?



Programmed

Does your community hold events and yearly programs that bring in new visitors to the downtown?



Parking Options

Does your retail district provide parking options for visitors? Are parking signs visible?



Managed

The burden of planning for a retail district falls on the local government; however, day-to-day management is often provided by an outside organization. Having an organizational structure in place increases a downtown's capacity for development and reduces responsibilities on the local government. Management structures help with access to funding resources and attract new development without burdening residents with increased taxes.

For managed districts, consider a yearly evaluation of the activities performed. Revisit the goals and make sure any strategies or incentives are flexible based on the retail market.

Not Managed?

Talk to the retailers in the district about their interest in forming a committee, no matter how large or small, formal or informal. While businesses compete with each other, a unified retail district can attract more customers if acting as one cohesive group. Table 2 outlines different types of management structures to be explored. Business Improvement District guidelines recommend at least 150 businesses. Micro districts can also be created

with about 40 to 100 businesses. If the district has less than 40 businesses, consider a merchants' association, or look into how the district can become a certified Main Street. Civic associations or business authorities are also alternatives to consider, but they often do not provide a reliable source of funds. Encourage retailers in the business district to maintain similar hours. This will start the process of working together. Below are additional strategies to consider.

Centralized Retail Management

Downtown retail districts can use the shopping mall experience to help manage and unify. Centralized Retail Management (CRM) organizes retailers to function as a single unit, which includes coordinated days and hours of operation, common area maintenance, retailer location strategies, window merchandising, customer service, and promotion. In downtowns where there are multiple property owners and business operators, a commitment is needed for CRM to succeed.

Operational Hours

A challenge for many downtowns is motivating small business owners to extend their hours and maintain extended days. Most business owners cite that low volumes cannot justify the

cost of keeping their store open. However, potential shoppers will not venture to the downtown to shop if they believe everything is closed. Downtowns can begin to change this ideology by remaining open on weekdays until 7:00 pm to give shoppers an opportunity to make purchases after work. This can be done in conjunction with a regularly scheduled community event. The growing pains of extended hours can be difficult. It will take at least six months of extended hours before the market catches on; but the long-term rewards are worth it!

Common Area Maintenance

Common areas include the public right of way, sidewalks, parks, and plazas. While these may be maintained by the local government, a downtown management entity can act as a stable funding source and service provider. Maintenance also includes repairs and seasonal decorating.

Retailer Location Strategies

Achieving a coordinated retailer location strategy in a downtown is a challenge given the fragmented property ownership and lack of a single management entity. An overall strategy should be developed in the community's long-term plan to have key retailers (those that are considered anchors and will attract other

retailers) in more prominent locations, such as corners.

Window Merchandising

Window merchandising is essentially free advertising, and many downtown retail strategies do not include this detail. Window displays should be changed on a monthly basis or, at a minimum, seasonally. Window displays should allow the indoor activity to be seen from the street.

Customer Service

Quality customer service varies, but downtown retailers can “out service” shopping malls. Seemingly small gestures, such as knowing a customer’s name, keeping their preferences on file, or contacting them when a particular product becomes available, creates a customer-friendly atmosphere. Most shoppers opt for better customer service over the cheapest price available. Retail store owners can personalize their store. Shoppers will be more apt to return.

Promotion

Working together as a cohesive unit, the retail district can be promoted as a single entity. When retailers in the same district work together to promote themselves, target sales goals and visitor expectations can be reached quicker. This is especially helpful when it comes to promoting special events in the downtown area.



Window merchandising enhances opportunities to sell products. Two examples of what not to do for window merchandising are: 1. The J& D Whistle Stop completely covers their windows and does not allow for people to see what is inside. Not allowing potential shoppers to view the inside of the store will act as a deterrent. 2. The Twice as Nice Boutique has too much merchandise to look at in the window and is overwhelming for the pedestrian. Two positive examples of window displays are: 3. The Mill Street Village provides lights and window boxes to attract window shoppers. 4. The Ardmore Initiative, manager of the Lancaster Avenue retail district, has a storefront for easy access and advertising. While a nonretail use, the storefront is welcoming.

Table 2: Retail District Management Types

Type	Explanation	Location	Number of Businesses	Required Interest
Business Improvement District	Property owners voluntarily tax themselves to fund improvements or services for a defined area. BIDs provide a funding mechanism for public improvements, such as security, lighting, or sanitation. BIDs can be created for businesses and residential areas, but require approval from the governing body.	Urban Suburban	150+	High
Main Street	The National Trust for Historic Preservation utilizes the historic character of established downtowns to ignite revitalization. Designated Main Streets strive to revitalize their downtowns through their four-point approach.	Urban Suburban	25+	Medium-High
Retail Recruiter	Retail recruiters serve as matchmakers for vacant storefronts. Retail recruiters should have knowledge regarding the local demographics, what retailers currently exist in the area, and the available amount of leasable retail space. Retail recruiters should understand the zoning and permitting requirements, any pending infrastructure/transportation improvements or beautification plans, and available financial or design incentives.	Urban Suburban Rural	Any	Medium-High
Community Development Corporations (CDCs)	A CDC is a nonprofit, public-private partnership that helps to attract new business. Funding for a CDC often comes from the municipal government and donations. They often have the ability to acquire land, demolish buildings, and make site improvements, but most focus on business retention. The CDC has an established board of directors and the chair is often from the private sector. CDCs can range in size, depending on the amount of funds, land area to be included as part of the organization's mission, and population of the community.	Urban Suburban Rural	Any	Low-Medium
Merchant's Associations	Merchants' Associations focus on creating revenue through events, advertising, and building consensus among retail properties. They often help recruit retailers by fielding questions, offering site assistance and assisting with the permitting process. Merchant's associations are the easiest type of management structure, as they require a low number of businesses to exist.	Urban Suburban Rural	2+	Low-Medium
Enterprise Zone	Businesses located within Enterprise Zones are eligible for state incentives, which may include a state sales tax exemption or a utility tax exemption for businesses of a certain size. Many communities provide additional local financial incentives to attract new business. Many communities that have enterprise zones receive funding from state and private sources for operations.	Urban	Any	Low
Economic Development Department	Most communities assign the economic development department to be responsible for administration of land-use and zoning regulations. While it can be advantageous to keep decision-making within the realms of the local government, this type of model often is exposed to short-term political change and leads to retail goals changing in the short term. To help mitigate some of the political impacts, the economic development department should assign a point person to be the principal liaison with any potential developer, retailer, or broker.	Urban Suburban Rural	Any	Low

Source: DVRPC, 2013



Retail-Appropriate

Retail-appropriate districts often have a vacancy rate of less than 20 percent, and a nonretail use rate of less than 10 percent. The ideal retail space has ceilings of 14 feet or more, is at least 20 feet in width, 45 to 90 feet in depth, has sidewalks of at least eight feet and few disruptions in continuity of retail stores (few instances of professional offices, open space, or residential-only buildings). While these are the primary conditions that make a retail district attractive, there are additional factors such as site criteria, demographics, and geographic context that contribute to the appropriateness of a particular location.

Already Retail-Appropriate?

If the downtown already meets the site criteria that retailers prefer, consider a retail broker training program for members of the BID or merchant association.

Retail-appropriate spaces should be identified in the community's regulatory documents and requires stores to provide 25 percent clear glass for window displays and gazing. Storefront signage should also be in character with the building and district.

In addition, it is important to understand what type of retailers will be able to utilize the space that exists in your retail district. For instance, it makes no sense to recruit a major retailer if stores are no larger than 3,000 square feet.

Complementary Retail

When sizing up a potential site, retailers will consider the existing businesses to compare the customer base. Are the existing retail uses complementary to this new potential retailer? Meaning, do the existing businesses already draw the correct consumer to the downtown?

Addressing Vacancy

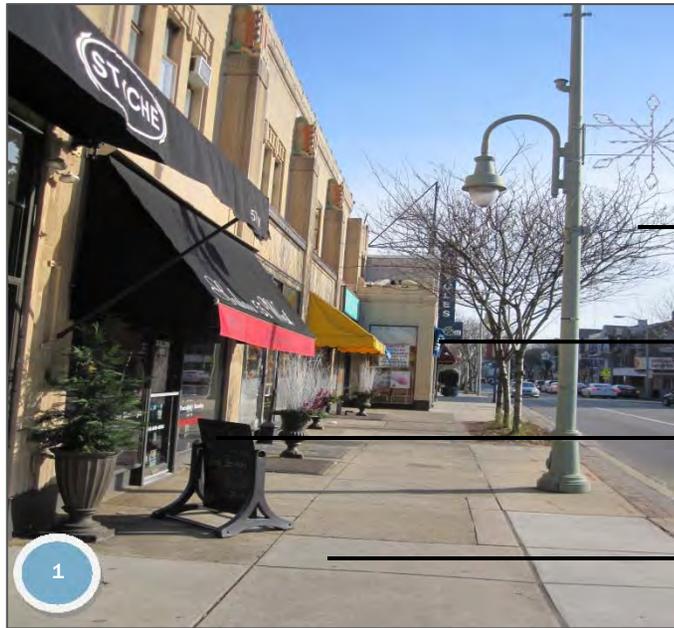
Building off of the community profile, make sure that the existing mix of tenants corresponds to the neighborhood's retail strength. If there is an abundance of nonretail and vacant space, create a list of names and addresses of property owners of the vacant retail spaces. Contact them about the space to find out what their future plans are and if they would be willing to allow the community to address the façade. Communities can minimize the effect of the vacancies by introducing a window art program by placing historic photos of the neighborhood in the windows and maintain the front of the building with volunteers.

Although permission is needed from the storeowner, it is important to make the appearance of the store seem as vital as possible. Make sure the public realm is maintained and the storefront remains lit at night.

Ask all property owners to participate in creating a “retail experience.” Discuss creating activity and having outside lights on afterhours. Invite them to participate in the management or volunteer organization and consider allowing nonretail businesses to take advantage of any façade or sign programs offered.

Site Criteria

Retailers rely on four specific site criteria when evaluating properties. They include visibility, entryways, accessibility, and utilities.



Underground Utilities

Visible from inside and out

Clear entryway

Pedestrian-accessible



Urban form and uniformity

Clear entryway

Pedestrian-accessible

1. This restaurant along Lancaster Avenue, Ardmore, PA, illustrates the four site criteria with visibility from the inside and out; clearly defined entryway, pedestrian access with room for outside dining, and hidden utility lines.
2. Nassau Street in Princeton, NJ, also provides options for retailers. Each store has clear glass, defined entryways, pedestrian access, and a uniform look with store awnings.

Visibility

To help attract customer traffic, downtown retailers should utilize visual merchandising practices. A well-planned interior can attract impulse buyers and reinforce the quality of goods. Merchandise should be clean and easy to navigate. Some easy merchandising practices for downtown retail districts should include:

- ✦ Simple and easy window displays;
- ✦ Change window displays weekly;
- ✦ Avoid handmade and taped signage;
- ✦ Constantly update the store with new finishes, colors, and fixtures; and
- ✦ Display a sample of store merchandise or theme along the storefront.

Entryways

Entryways should be easy to find for shoppers. Ideally, the door should be a different color and have the address of the store. If the entryway is to the side or rear of the building, provide proper signage.

Accessibility

A building is retail appropriate if it is able to be accessed. For instance, utilizing the second floor of many buildings for retail purposes is not accessible, as elderly or handicapped persons may not be able to climb the stairs. Appropriate spaces will be accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Utilities

Many retailers look for spaces that have infrastructure in place. Many downtown districts have overhead utility lines. Having underground utilities is preferred because they will not become a nuisance to trees or block signage.

Regulatory Compliance

An additional component of retail appropriate spaces includes supportive zoning and site regulations. Retailers prefer to locate in communities where the development process is clear, concise, and streamlined.

Right Sizing

Most retail districts do not take into account the retail market and often include too much land area. By over-zoning for commercial and retail uses, strategic recruitment becomes more difficult. In many cases, smaller districts (one to three blocks) are more successful, as they have less space to fill and are walkable. By conducting a market analysis, the community will have a realistic expectation of the type and amount of retail the district can support. The district should then be rezoned to the appropriate size.



Pedestrian-Friendly

Downtowns should serve the pedestrian, whether walking for function or leisure. Walkability increases the capture rate of expenditures from the primary trade area, which equals higher, reliable sales.

The definition of a walkable downtown to a retailer means having sidewalks with appropriate width, food and beverage establishments with outdoor cafes, and properly spaced trees and streetlights (visibility and maintained). Sidewalks are often the first and last impression for shoppers. Although many people drive to their retail destination, the last part of their journey to a storefront is always on foot. Providing a memorable walking experience is paramount. This starts with the actual sidewalk environment and safety.

Already Pedestrian-Friendly?

Even if the community is already considered a safe environment for pedestrians, continue to make safety a priority. Work with volunteers to help keep the retail environment clean.

Many older retail districts have sidewalks, but they often lack the specifications that retailers require. Below are some strategies to consider in creating a safe pedestrian environment.

Sidewalk Environment

Sidewalks have three components. Shown in Figure 3 are the storefront zone, walkway zone, and amenity zone. Sidewalks should be no less than eight feet for retail appropriateness, but to accommodate the pedestrian and outdoor furniture, sidewalks should be at least 15 feet.

Safety

Pedestrian-friendly districts need to be safe or have the perception of being safe. Shoppers will not want to visit the downtown after dark if they do not feel safe. Safer areas have:

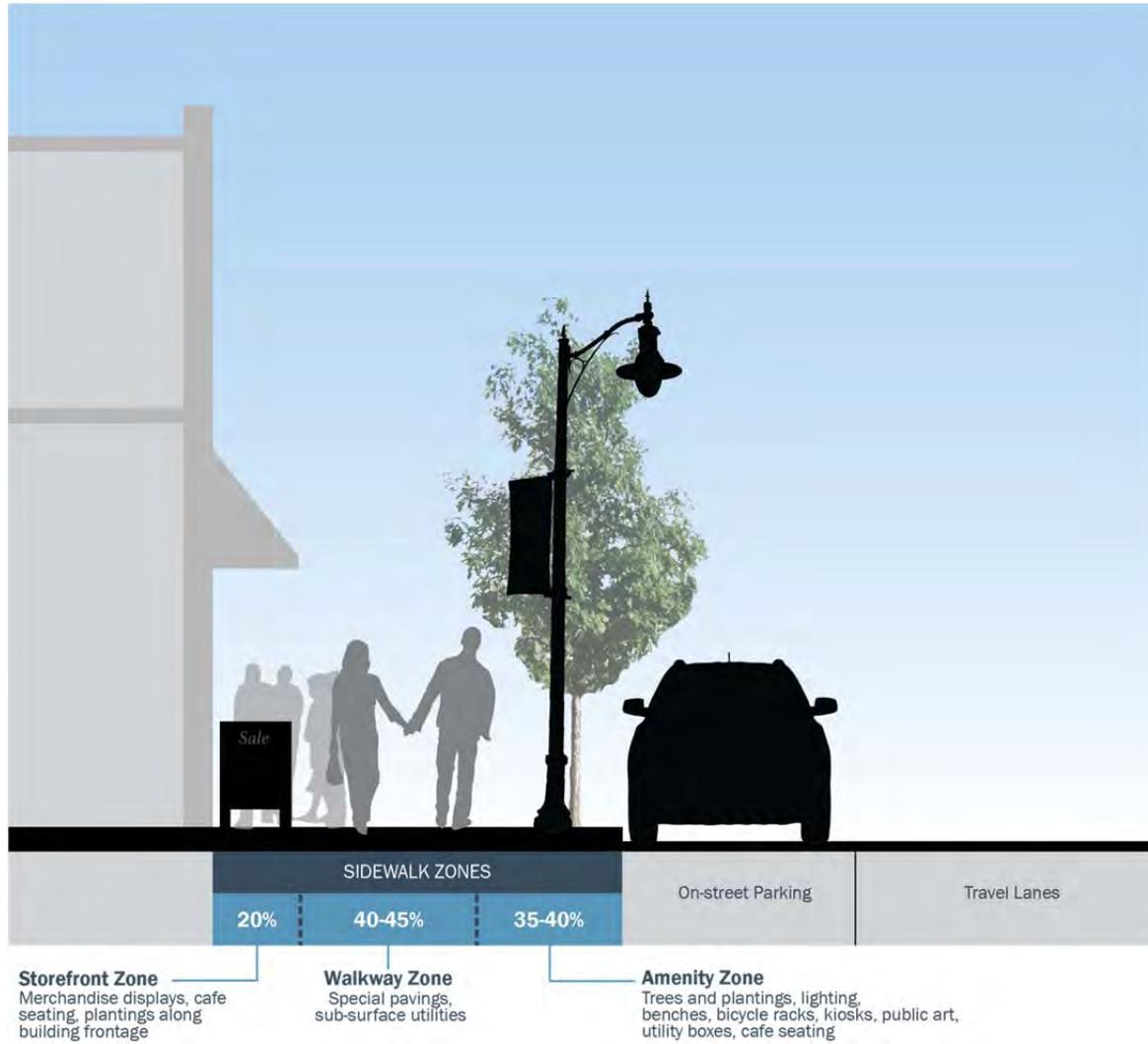
- ✦ Buildings between two to six floors;
- ✦ Active uses above retail spaces;
- ✦ Retail vacancy rates under 10 percent;

- ✦ Low crime statistics; and
- ✦ Less difference between median household income and average household income.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on the premise that a properly designed public realm can reduce both the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime. Crime prevention includes addressing surveillance, maintenance, sidewalks, parking garages, and storefronts. Keeping eyes on the street will help to deter crime.

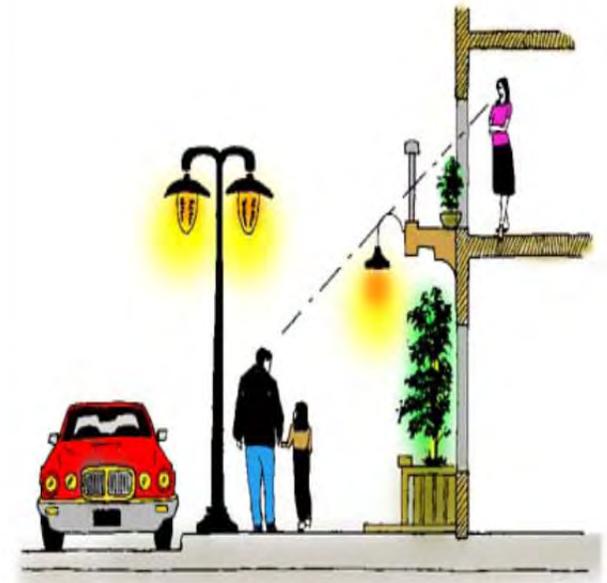
Defensible design should be incorporated into the downtown retail district. The biggest deterrents to crime are lighting, watchful eyes, and clear sightlines. Proper lighting is an effective crime deterrent because it can discourage criminal activity. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 3: Sidewalk Zones



Source: DVRPC, 2013

Figure 4: Safety Zones



This illustration shows elements of safe districts. They include eyes above the street, proper lighting, and buildings between two and six floors.

Source: www.smgov.net

Increasing the walkability and safety of the downtown retail district can be done in the relative short term for minimal cost.

- ✦ At different times of the day, observe pedestrian and bicycle activity in the neighborhood. Is the walking and biking experience hindered? Note sidewalks uplifted by tree roots, lack of curb cuts, lack of bike parking, and low tree branches.
- ✦ Talk to restaurant owners about providing outdoor seating. Walkability will increase when local restaurants provide tables and chairs outdoors.
- ✦ If the walking environment is hindered by the high speed of traffic, provide a radar speed display for passing motorists. Work with your local government to install temporary traffic calming measures within the retail district and enforce vehicular speeds. On-street parking also serves to slow down traffic.
- ✦ Store owners, as well as nonretail owners, should leave display

window lighting on until 11pm and during the day and evening on weekends.

- ✦ To determine if there is a perceived safety problem in the downtown, talk to merchants and residents. Conduct walkthroughs of the district during the day and night, noting areas with gaps in lighting, unmaintained landscapes, or graffiti. Promote and support businesses that maintain their stores and make certain merchants understand their responsibility to the public realm.
- ✦ Retail business owners should install the best lighting they can afford. To encourage safety, develop a small loan program for businesses that are willing to provide safe and effective lighting. Lighting can also be sustainable. Energy savings can be provided with skylights, windows, and low-wattage fluorescent lighting in back-room areas.

Garbage left at the sidewalk contributes to an unsafe feeling for pedestrians.

- ✦ Plant shrubs, trees, and flowers and keep them in good condition;
- ✦ Provide trash cans and recycling bins to keep streets clear of litter;
- ✦ Remove graffiti as soon as it appears;
- ✦ Develop an ambassador program with volunteers to walk the street;
- ✦ Engage the local police to see how they can help; and
- ✦ Inventory abandoned buildings and contact owners to press for sale or lease, repurposing or activation.





Parking Options

Parking is critical for retailers and consumers. Street-front retailing requires well-planned, convenient on-street parking that is easy-to-use, clean, and well lit. Parking ratios vary depending on the type of shopping experience.

As a rule of thumb, for convenience shopping, communities should provide three to four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross building area with high turnover (eight to 10 vehicle changes per hour). Parking meters should be used in small shopping districts only when street parking is consistently unavailable. There are few small villages and towns with the critical mass of businesses necessary for a visitor to spend more than an hour shopping.

Parking garages are often prohibitively expensive for municipalities to construct. However, if structured parking is desired for retail sales, it should be designed, constructed, and managed at a higher level than typical office or residential garages. Dirty, poorly lit parking garages with

confusing signage give the impression that the nearby goods and services are low-value, poor quality, and dated. Retail parking garages should have floor-to-ceiling heights of eight to 12 feet, painted surfaces, natural light supplemented with color-corrected lighting, logical signage, and office-quality finishes in the elevators and stairwells. Having a manned station also provides an additional welcoming feeling to the shopping district.

Additional design features to consider include:

- ✦ Locate parking garages and lots that encourage ground-level activity and have attractive pedestrian linkages;
- ✦ Mixed use buildings, or linear buildings;
- ✦ Use parking facilities for shared uses; or
- ✦ Charge a nominal fee.

Buildings are the most fundamental element of any downtown, particularly occupied ones. Parking lots located interior to their blocks is preferred.

Parking is an important issue and must be addressed, but tearing buildings down or removing lanes of traffic is often not the best long-term solution. Consider the following questions when developing a parking strategy.

- ✦ How does parking intersect with retail goals?
- ✦ Does the existing parking supply meet the demand?
- ✦ What is the dominant feature of the retail environment?
- ✦ Is there a way to provide parking without wide expanses of pavement?
- ✦ Can available parking be increased through shared parking strategies?
- ✦ Would higher parking prices encourage less traffic and generate additional municipal funds?

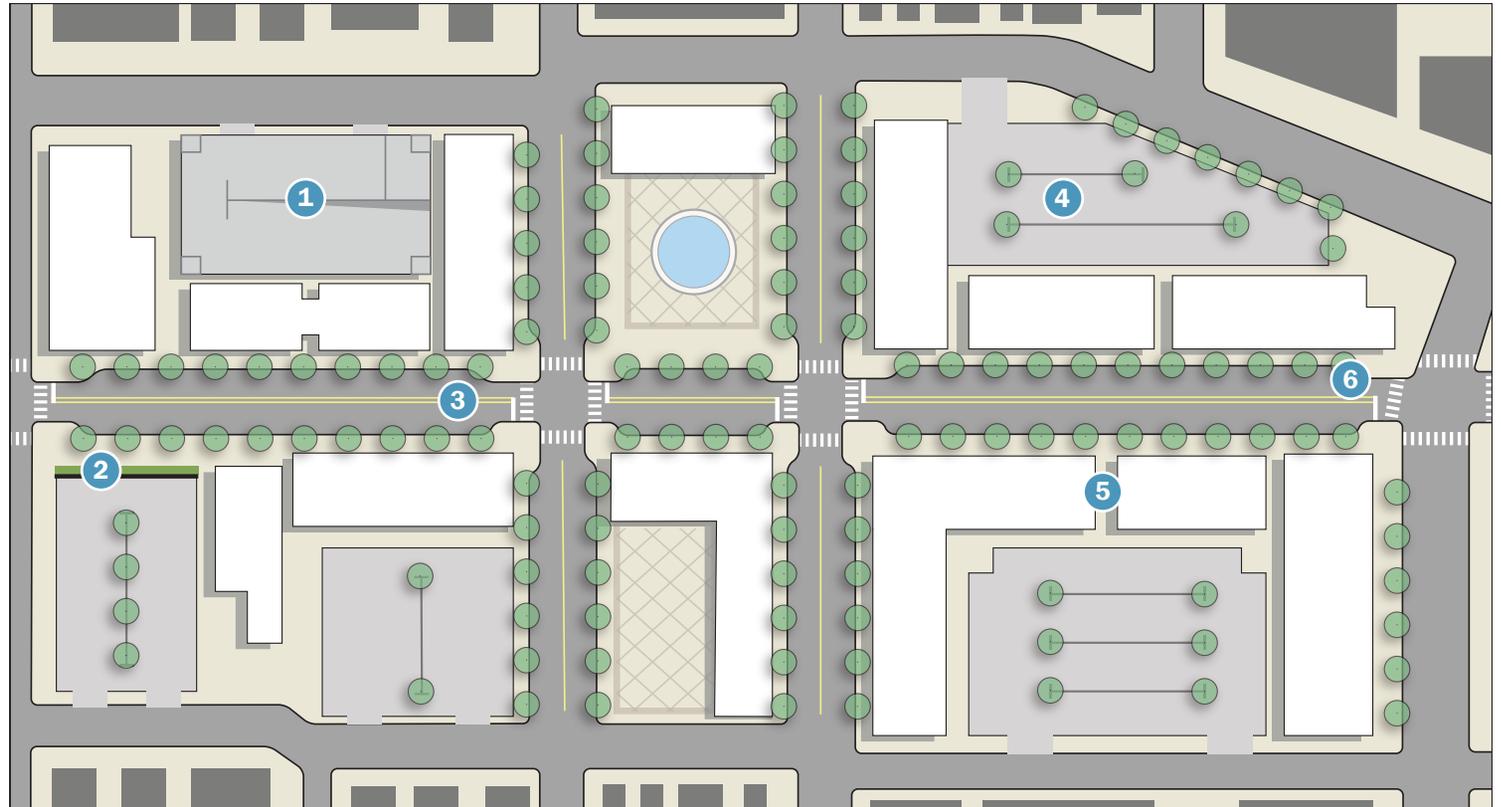
Remember, people do not visit downtowns to park their cars. Shoppers come to downtowns for the experience and ambience.

Figure 5: Retail Parking Strategies

Convenient and accessible parking is critical to the success of retail in downtown areas. Several strategies can help accommodate parking demand in these areas, while maintaining the pedestrian character and sense of place that make these retail districts unique.



Parking garages may be appropriate in high-demand areas. They should be strategically located and designed to reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Retail at the street level can encourage pedestrian activity and help reduce the visual impact. (Photo: Norristown, PA)



Large surface parking lots can detract from the pedestrian environment. Limit their width along pedestrian frontages and use **edge treatments**, such as fencing and landscaping, to create a buffer. (Photo: Swedesboro, NJ)



On-street parking should be prioritized for short-term visitor parking. A combination of parking rates, fines, and enforcement can be used to promote a reasonable vacancy rate for on-street spaces. (Photo: Downingtown, PA)



Off-street parking should be provided in a number of small convenient lots throughout a retail district. Parking lots should be located behind buildings, and include appropriate lighting, landscaping, and signage. (Photo: Haverford, PA)



Pedestrian connections should directly link parking lots to a shopping district's primary sidewalk network. These passages should be welcoming and convenient. (Photo: Bryn Mawr, PA)



Signage alerting motorists to the availability of off-street parking should be incorporated into a larger wayfinding system. (Photo: Ardmore, PA)



Unified

The urban form of a retail district often acts as a unifying agent. Streets are built with two-story buildings offering retail on the ground floor with offices or residential uses on the second floor.

Unify the Downtown

Unifying the downtown can be achieved through the urban form – tree lined streets and historic architecture. Often, this urban form provides the district the opportunity to brand itself. Branding the downtown requires an established group of retailers willing to act as a unified group. A quality brand can increase exposure and act as a recruitment tool for new retailers.

A downtown brand that is built upon what is hoped for, rather than what exists, runs a far greater risk of failure. The brand is created based on how a neighborhood or community perceives itself. A proper brand is more than words and images used along with a place name; it is a long-term, permanent feeling of what a place should be and mean. Often a brand

can begin to take shape by an existing cohesive element in the downtown. For instance, is there a historic district already in place? Is there particular architecture that lends itself to creating the retail district? These elements often already exude a feeling among shoppers and residents. To further raise awareness, the brand should encapsulate the neighborhood's intrinsic value. Communicate the architectural significance, walkability, or historic feel of the downtown shopping district. Make the neighborhood distinguishable from other nearby neighborhoods.

A logo is then created from the brand. Shopping and dining guides, event promotions, and advertising should utilize the design elements of the brand, while taglines and images should reinforce the brand concept. The logo should be vivid and positive.

The final step is to spread the word! Promoting and enhancing should be continual. Continue to talk to residents and businesses to guide the message

and increase recognition and usage. Maintain good relations with community organizations, such as chambers of commerce, to help promote the community brand.

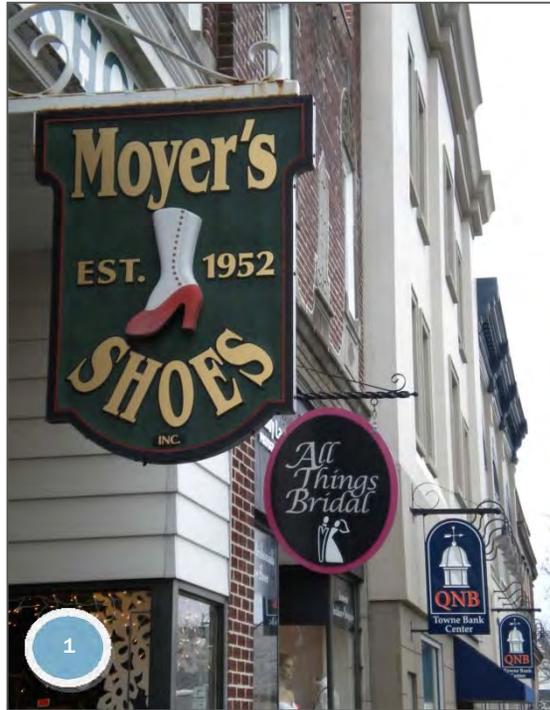
Signs

Proper retail signage is important to market individual businesses, but it can also serve to unify the retail district. Most downtowns will have individual signs, as well as wayfinding. Effective signage begins with well-written zoning codes and design standards. Sign ordinances that are too restrictive limit creativity. Keep sign requirements to the proper scale for the pedestrian.

Properly sized signage will help unify the downtown. Review local zoning and building codes for sign requirements. The following elements should be considered:

- ✦ Limit the size of the sign to one square foot of signage for each linear foot of storefront;

- ✦ Solid or floating letters are preferred as they give the impression of merchandise that is better quality;
- ✦ Prohibit signs placed directly on the front of the building, as it lacks visual depth and becomes a maintenance issue; and
- ✦ Illuminated box signs are not appropriate for a pedestrian-friendly shopping district. Text should only be illuminated by light fixtures attached to the building.



These adjacent signs all incorporate the recommended elements for a downtown retail district. 1. Signs along Main Street in Quakertown, PA, are the same size and height, providing a unifying appearance. Letters are solid colors. 2. The sandwich sign in Lansdowne, PA, is placed outside the pedestrian zone and provides information on the hours of the business and where parking is located. 3. Signs along State Street in Media, PA, are flat and easy to read. They are the appropriate signs for a downtown retail district and relate to the scale of the storefront.



Branding and signs are both part of unifying a retail district. 1. This wayfinding map in Doylestown provides direction to visitors and shoppers. 2. These brick plates unify the downtown district in Newtown, PA. 3. The Bordentown City flags are placed on light posts in the downtown area. 4. Rather than blank brick walls along pathways to the parking lots, Merchant Street in Audubon, NJ, is colorful and interesting.

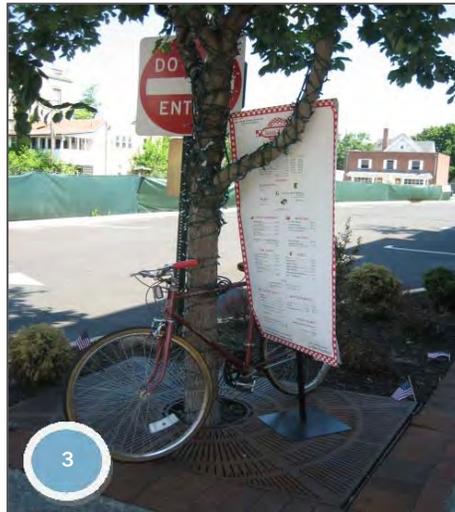


Transit-Accessible

Locating in a downtown retail district provides the opportunity to serve pedestrians, transit-users, and motorists.

Within the Greater Philadelphia region, transit accessibility has gained relevance to potential retailers. Most of the existing successful downtown retail districts are anchored by a transit station. For neighborhood goods, and services (NG&S) and Food and Beverage (F&B) retailers, proximity to a transit stop (within three to four blocks) ensures that residents have regular patterns of activity that pass retail locations, such as dropping off dry cleaning on the way to work or happy hour after work. Transit riders are more likely to conduct errands on their way to the station if the opportunity exists.

If a downtown has a bus, trolley, or train station, it is important to recognize this asset. Utilize wayfinding for transit riders, keep station stops clean, and provide protection from the weather. Consider a retail strategy that includes potential customers using transit, i.e., if your community has a transfer station, make sure there are goods and services, as well as quick-bite eating establishments near the stop/station.

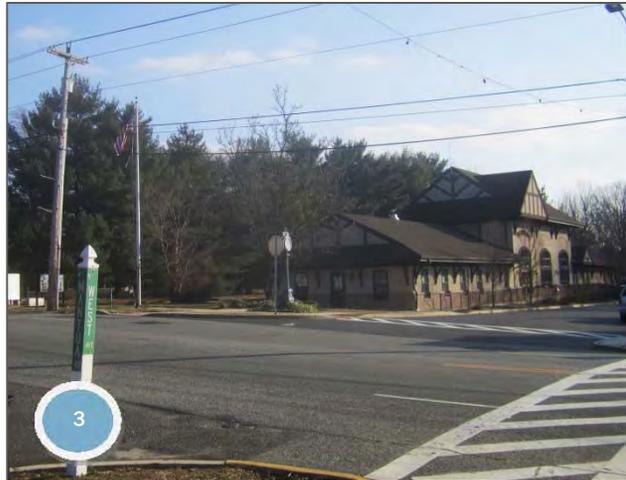
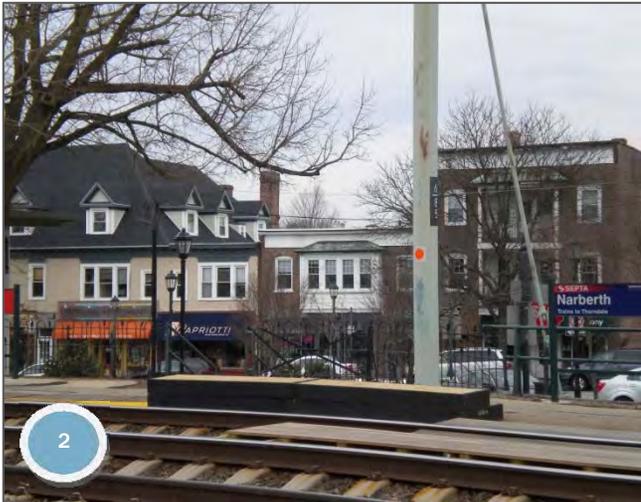


Many older retail districts are transit-accessible. Creating retail options close to or even in the transit station provides additional foot traffic. 1. The SEPTA Wayne Station is in walking distance of many shops and eateries. 2. Trax restaurant in Ambler is across the street from the train platform. 3. A savvy retailer in Collingswood, NJ, places a menu near a tree where bicyclists park.



Promote Transit

Retailers can promote their businesses and access to transit through programs such as [SEPTA's Pass Perks Program](#). Using a weekly or monthly SEPTA pass, transit riders can receive discounts at participating restaurants, stores, or destinations throughout the region. Visit www.septapassperks.org for more information.



1. The River LINE Station in Palmyra, NJ, is directly across Broad Street from the retail shops. 2. The retail district in Narberth, PA, is easily visible and accessible from the SEPTA regional rail station. 3. Future train service may be restored to Wenonah, NJ, providing direct access to the retail businesses in the downtown.



Programmed

Events and programs are important for the visibility of the downtown retail district. Events will bring people to the downtown, with the hope they will make purchases at local businesses.

Events are created for different purposes. Many local governments, BIDs, and community groups plan events throughout the year. There are generally two types of events: special and fundraising. It is important to distinguish between a special event and a fundraising event, so the goals can be clearly established. Is it to bring customers to downtown or to raise money for the local organizational group?

Special events are used to build downtown traffic, while *fundraising* events are designed to raise money and not necessarily bring people back to the downtown.

Plan special events for the downtown around the community's heritage, include traditional and not-so traditional holidays, or on dates that have local meaning. Special events

require many hours from volunteers. As such, make sure that the event is not weather dependent and pays for itself! Special events include parades, book fairs, craft fairs, or festivals.

Many communities utilize weekly, monthly, or seasonal programming to bring new customers to the downtown, such as First Fridays, Restaurant Weeks, Farmers' Markets, and Concert Series. These generally are used to bring additional customers to the downtown and often become sustainable on their own. No matter the duration of the event, marketing and promotion is important.

It is also important to pick the proper location for the event or program. Having a Farmers' Market in a closed alley will not provide for proper exposure. Make sure that the event is located near the retail businesses to be seen.

Civic/Cultural Anchors

Successful retail districts include a civic or cultural anchor to help bring potential shoppers to the downtown. Many times these anchors have their own events and programs. By building off of an anchor's events, local governments can construct community integration and visibility. Having the downtown anchored by a civic or cultural use will draw customers from further distances and lengthen the "time on the street," meaning the frequency and amount of purchases made from local retailers. Civic and cultural anchors can be economic engines for the downtown, but make sure they are right-sized for the community.

Many downtowns also have civic or cultural retailers. This is a retailer that provides programs, such as a fabric shop that has quilting classes, coffee shops with a community bulletin, or a local bookstore with reading times.

If the community does not currently host special events or programs, meet with local business owners and officials to get one started. Link a special event to a cause or meaningful day for the community. For example, Lansdale Borough celebrates Founder's Day every August.



Events and programs can be found throughout the summer months. 1. This painting at the Pottstown Farmers' Market location serves to alert the shopper to the location as well as adding a unique design feature to the downtown. 2. The Farmers' Market in Doylestown, PA, is held downtown. 3. Summer concerts in Souderton bring out people of all ages. 4. The Narberth Theatre is a cultural draw to the downtown. 5. Doylestown designates their cultural district.



Chapter Four: Municipal Actions to Revitalize Retail Districts

Municipalities can take the following actions to revitalize their retail districts and create a market for new retail: prepare a retail district plan, improve the development review process, update retail zoning, provide incentives to attract new retail, enlist partners, and track success.

Prepare a Retail District Plan

Planning is critical to revitalizing and reinventing a downtown retail district. A plan should be created that outlines the type and location of future retail, based on current demographics, geography, and infrastructure. At a minimum, it should include:

- ✦ A realistic vision;
- ✦ Clearly defined goals and strategies;
- ✦ Identification of stakeholders;
- ✦ Community profile (with retail inventory);
- ✦ Evaluation of retail opportunities and constraints; and
- ✦ Outreach strategy.

The retail district plan can be created as part of the community’s comprehensive plan or as a separate document, but it must be consistent with the overall goals of the community. A timeframe should be established with short term goals (1-5 years) as well as long-term goals (5-10 years). Establishing the community baseline will help create realistic expectations and help municipal officials understand the complexities of retail development. An ongoing outreach strategy is critical, as retail markets change quickly.



Attractive storefronts add to the shopping experience. Shown is the Barrington Coffee House, Clements Bridge Road, Barrington, NJ (top); florist on State Street in Media, PA (left); and Nellie Bly's Old Tyme Ice Cream Parlour, Main Street, Riverton, NJ (right).

Vision

Recruiting retail is not simply the act of identifying a business and then opening that business in town. Local governments want to make it abundantly clear that new businesses should complement and grow within the existing business district. If there is an established district, existing business may find that it is a struggle to remain open, and it may be difficult to retain everyone. A realistic vision with goals and objectives will provide the framework for all businesses in the retail district. A sample vision statement may read, *“The economic development vision for community x is to strive to maintain and enhance a diverse tax base with a mix of retail, office, and industrial businesses to ensure the quality of life our community deserves.”*

A community can make itself more attractive to retailers without sacrificing a vision. Without understanding what attracts retailers, a community can be left with the wrong type of retail. The vision should reflect the primary goal of the retail district. For instance, is the primary goal for the retail district to preserve historic structures? Infill abandoned properties? Create a revitalized shopping district? Once the primary goal is established, a guiding statement should be created. Goals and strategies should then support this new vision.

Goals and Strategies

Long-term goals should be based on the community’s desires and needs. Develop strategies to implement the goals. They can be planning, financial, and economic strategies. For instance, if the primary goal of your downtown retail district is brownfield redevelopment, then your strategies should be directed toward that aim. Creating a merchant’s association or façade program will be less effective than creating a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district or other financial incentive tied to redevelopment.

Identification of Stakeholders

Be sure to include all pertinent stakeholders in the planning process. This includes business owners, community officials, government agencies, businesses associations, and consumers, as well as important players in the retail recruitment process. Each group will have their own ideas of what the retail district should be. Below is a list of stakeholders and their role in downtown development.

Developers manage the construction or rehabilitation of retail facilities. Developers often have experience in creating a retail mix that will be appropriate for a specific location.

Retailers perform many of the developer functions. There are three types of retailers:

- ✦ Anchor stores – Anchor retail stores serve as the key retail in large developments (Wal-Mart or Target). Anchors attract consumers, as well as other retailers to tap into the potential spending power generated by the anchor retailer. Anchor retail stores are largely found in superregional malls. The concept of the anchor retail store is transferable to downtown retail districts if the space, demographics, and household incomes exist.
- ✦ Credit-worthy tenants (best specialty stores) are generally smaller than anchors, but are powerful generators of spending power. Often found in regional shopping centers. These include cell phone stores or supermarkets.
- ✦ Local retailers provide a unique identity and connection to the downtown retail district. These include independently-owned stores.

Real Estate Brokers forge relationships with developers and retailers. They work on commission and are paid by the developer when a lease is signed. Many large retailers work through brokers, so it may be necessary to use one to attract a large retailer.

Consumers drive revenue by visiting the stores and purchasing. Many shoppers are as concerned with the shopping experience as the goods they buy. It is important to have a

pleasant atmosphere for shoppers to enjoy themselves.

Community Officials provide guidance on the development and retail opportunities in the community. Community officials ensure that the economic development goals of the community are considered. When a BID or other management structure does not exist, community officials will be the point of contact for developers and retailers.

Community Profile

Create a community profile that includes all physical and demographic information. Map out where existing and duplicative businesses are located. This will give a visual of the retail environment. Be sure to mark on the map any regional shopping centers. This is important when evaluating market need and supply. As part of the community profile, conduct a retail inventory of the district. Be sure to include the name of the business, type of retail, use, and owner, as shown in Figure 6.

Opportunities and Constraints

From the community profile, identify opportunities and constraints. Opportunities could include infill possibilities, streetscape enhancements, new traffic patterns, or new transit service. Constraints could include elements such as physical barriers, population

and income spending power, or lack of a single point of contact for businesses.

Outreach Strategy

No matter the condition of the downtown, communities should always be getting the word out about retail opportunities. Be sure to outline what outreach will be employed. For instance, will social media be utilized such as creating a Facebook page? Are there community brochures? Outreach should be continuous and strategies should evolve. Be sure to review outreach strategies on a yearly basis to evaluate what is working and what is not.



Art studios and galleries can be used as an element to revitalize a downtown retail district. Merchantville, NJ, has artist studio space located along Chapel Avenue.

Figure 6: Sample Retail Inventory

Retailer	No./Street	Use (retail/office/vacant/other)	Retail Category (NG&S, F&B, GAFO)		Property Owner	Local/Chain

Source: DVRPC, 2013

Regardless if the economic development goal is to recruit new business or retain existing business, most older suburbs are in the process of revitalizing their downtown retail districts. Outlined below are the 4 R's of retail planning. This will help communities understand the primary goal for their downtown strategies.

Recruit

Retail recruitment is the process of attracting new businesses to an existing retail area.

When recruiting new businesses, be prepared to provide information about the area's demographics, location of competition, and the existing retailers. Inform prospective retailers about any new infrastructure projects, beautification plans, or other planned municipal projects that will make the downtown retail appropriate. Include information about financial incentives, rebates, or waivers.

Retain

Keeping existing businesses is easier and less expensive than recruiting new ones. Independent retailers can enhance the authenticity of the shopping district. Also, local store owners tend to be more supportive of local initiatives and contribute to the safety of the district. Many retail managers utilize business retention surveys to enable owners to give feedback to local officials. Issues for retailers range from trash removal to sidewalk condition to support for events and programs. It is important to provide a mechanism for existing business owners to be able to voice their concerns and feel part of the community.

Revitalize

Revitalization is the process of restoring economic vitality to an area that has fallen upon disinvestment. Municipalities use several different approaches, such as creating a Main Street or using eminent domain for infill. Revitalization includes infrastructure or design development or embracing new trends. Revitalization involves more than a single site, so it is important to examine adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhoods when developing revitalization goals. Targeted infill may include the construction of a new building with façade and streetscape treatments.

Replace

Retail replacement is not used as often as revitalization. In some downtowns, a decrease in pedestrian activity and related retail activity was offset by a rise in auto body repair stores, light industry, and manufacturing. These types of businesses are not pedestrian friendly. Rather than eliminate these businesses, municipalities can offer the property owner incentives to relocate to more appropriate locations. In many instances, older downtown retail districts provide a mixed environment with auto-oriented and pedestrian-friendly uses within the same area.

Source: *Retail 1-2-3*, ICSC.

Improve the Development Review Process

A positive investment climate is crucial for a community to be successful. Developers appreciate quick turnaround on permits and inspections, low fees, and one-stop shopping. To ensure efficiency, communities should review their development process to make sure everything is clear and concise. Establishing a clear line of communication to decision-makers is also important.

Downtowns that have reversed downward trends have done so incrementally and strategically. As with most complex matters, a “quick fix” is rarely the answer to repair a downtown for the long term. Local officials must be clear regarding community regulations, have the leadership to carry through with the project, and ensure that the vision is adopted by all stakeholders in the community. Tools to help the community become attractive for business development may include:

- ✦ Consolidate the multiple reviews involved for many projects into a single application;
- ✦ Require a concept plan to be submitted for staff review prior to submission of the application that will be reviewed by the planning board;
- ✦ Allow certain details such as landscaping and lighting that are now required as part of a site plan to be reviewed and approved after plats have been recorded;
- ✦ Encourage public input at additional points in the process, such as before and after submission of the concept plan, and at meetings organized by the developer.
- ✦ Streamline the development review process;
- ✦ Provide a quick turnaround on permits/inspections (involves clear responsibilities, deadlines, chains of communication, and procedures);
- ✦ Institute low fees;
- ✦ Hold regular meetings with all departments to spot red flags;
- ✦ Recapture agreements for extending sewer/water service (an agreement authorizing reimbursement for the construction of improvements beneficial to the public);
- ✦ Maintain a current list of available properties; and
- ✦ Foster communication between property owners and developers.

Update Retail Zoning

Outdated zoning regulations can impede retail development. Often, community officials are not realistic about the amount of retail the downtown can support. Zoning maps are cluttered with retail and commercial areas, without a true regard for what the market in a particular community can support. A retail district will be more successful if planned to a proper size and business type, rather than allowing for uncoordinated business development.

Be clear when defining retail, commercial, and nonretail uses in all regulatory documents. It may be helpful to break out retail and commercial as two separate uses and clearly define the categories. It is important to remember that office uses are commercial/nonretail and have positive and negative impacts to the retail district and street activity. Because zoning regulations can impede or restrict new businesses opening in a downtown retail district, a thorough review of the existing codes, regulations, and design standards is essential. Local officials should consider the following:

- ✦ Setback requirements may not recognize zero lot line development as desirable in downtown locations;
- ✦ Floor area ratios or units per acre may need to be increased to allow enough residential development on the upper floor to make development economically feasible;
- ✦ Zoning regulations should be flexible to allow for quality architecture, upper floor setbacks, and building facade improvements;
- ✦ Minimum parking ratios need to be reviewed to recognize the reduced off-street parking need in downtowns because of on-street parking availability, shared parking between complementary uses, and the use of public transit; and
- ✦ While most retail is going into existing buildings, updated on-site stormwater requirements may be an issue. Zoning codes should note that these requirements are not relevant in existing buildings since the amount of impervious surface is not increasing. Regulations should be enforced for new or infill buildings.

Figure 7: Haddon Heights, NJ Zoning Map

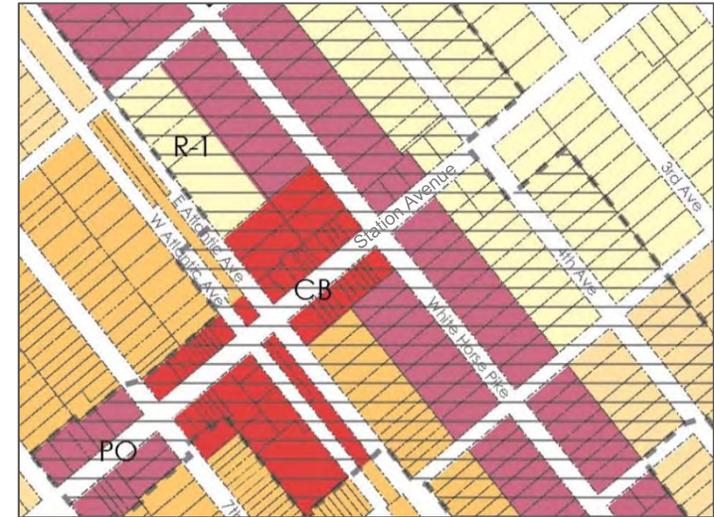


Figure 7: Haddon Heights has properly zoned the three-block area of Station Avenue for retail CB (in red), while properties along the White Horse Pike, which are more historic residential structures, are zoned for professional office (PO) uses. Source: Haddon Heights Public Workshops, 2012.

Provide Incentives to Attract New Retail

Competition for new businesses is high and economic development officials often use the same strategies. Careful use of physical and financial incentives can level the playing field, while misusing incentives can leave a community fiscally vulnerable.

Incentives serve to increase profitability or defray the costs of construction, relocation, or rehabilitation. The proper incentives may convince developers and retailers to invest in an older downtown. Provide incentives *only* if the project could not proceed without them and make sure there is a policy guide on their use. Generally, incentives are broken into three categories: regulatory incentives, financial incentives, and design incentives.

Below are guidelines for establishing municipal incentives:

- ✦ Establish policies before receiving requests to set expectations;
- ✦ Do not rely on the developer or retailer's analysis of what incentives are needed. Have an independent party review the

developer's projections of tax and sales revenue;

- ✦ Require the developer or retailer to argue his or her case, including substantiating the financial projections;
- ✦ Consider "look back" provisions, which permit the amount of the incentive to be reexamined during the course of a project;
- ✦ Avoid up-front payments. Developers often want financial incentives early, but if the project falls through or generates less money than expected, the municipality may not recoup its costs;
- ✦ Work with a successful developer. Require background information and visit other projects that he/she has completed.

Regulatory Incentives

Regulatory incentives are about zoning compliance and the permitting process. A community will become more attractive to a potential retailer if the development process is clear and available upfront. Regulatory incentives are low cost and can be done in the short term. Ensure that all members of the development process are aware of the incentives and consider assigning one person to be the main contact.

Sample Incentive Package for Community Rebates on Sales Tax and Fee Waivers

Projects must have:

- ✦ Brick and mortar location;
- ✦ Employees must be physically employed in a downtown location;
- ✦ Projected annual retail gross taxable sales of at least \$1.5 million;
- ✦ Must employ five or more full-time employees and have a minimum \$500,000 capital investment, including property, building, equipment, and renovation.

Incentives:

- ✦ Qualifying projects will be considered for rebates of up to 50 percent to the property developer or retailer of future city sales tax receipts over a 10-year period.
- ✦ The township will consider waiver of building permit fee.
- ✦ The township will consider waiver of water and sewer tap fee.

Source: Thomasville, AL.

Financial Incentives

While municipalities often think of retail as a revenue generator, local governments must be willing to invest in the downtown district as a whole. Fortunately, the right public investment can leverage 10 to 15 times that amount in private investment. The public sector cannot create a market for retail, but it can use public subsidies to leverage needed private investment. When offering incentives to prospective retailers, remember the following:

- ✦ Provide only enough to get an initial retail business moving forward. This is often enough to attract additional businesses.
- ✦ Establish an expected return on public dollars to evaluate the worthiness of each incentive. Review and develop a business's projections to ascertain if the incentive is worthy.
- ✦ Build performance-based incentives. If a particular goal is not achieved, the incentive must be given back, or offer rebates on future tax revenues.

For example, Cheltenham Township, Pennsylvania recently adopted a tax abatement ordinance to spur additional retail development in the 5 designated retail districts – Glenside, Elkins Park East, Elkins Park West, East Cheltenham Avenue and Cheltenham Village. Tax on the improved part of the property is phased in over five years and improvements can be made to new and existing businesses. To be eligible for the tax abatement, properties must meet the ordinance's definition of "deteriorating."

Financial Incentives

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is used by communities to help stimulate redevelopment. TIF allows infrastructure and other related improvements associated with specific developments to be funded by future tax revenue generated by the improvements. A loan for the improvements is secured and then incremental tax revenue above the predevelopment level is used to repay the loan. State legislation sets the parameters for the use of TIF.

Sales Tax Rebates create little risk for communities. Municipalities can rebate any portion of sales tax generated by a commercial development if a public purpose is demonstrated. Sales tax revenue can offset developer costs and be restricted to catalytic retail development, whether a shopping center or individual retailer. Rebates can include utility or other municipally-collected taxes.

Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) are facilitated by municipalities who offer loans for enterprises to improve conditions or equipment. Many states require that for every \$15,000 of RLF money, at least one full-time job must be created.

Fee waivers of municipal building fees reduce construction costs for retailers and developers. This does not require a community to put forth any money.

Catalyst tenant grants are much like tenant allowances given to department stores to anchor regional malls. Catalyst tenant grants can induce specific retail types to locate in key locations within the retail district. These grants are most effective in areas without a retail base. Catalyst grants should be given to only specific iconic tenants that will help attract additional retailers to the district.

Source: Retail 1-2-3, ICSC

Design Incentives

Infrastructure and community investment is essential to attracting new retail. Design incentives – design guidelines, land assembly, infrastructure, and parking – may be expensive, but can be worth the investment. By investing in the community, retailers are often willing to make the same investment. Improving the downtown atmosphere, providing sidewalks and plantings, providing for parking, or assembling land are important steps in planning for retail.

A common mistake for communities is to invest millions in the public realm with new street furniture and brick sidewalks, while ignoring vacant or deteriorating buildings, facades, or building condition. Communities should avoid focusing on design elements without also addressing the facilities. Building condition is a key criterion assessed by retailers when making location decisions.

Facade Programs

Incentives and matching grant programs for facade improvements are useful in older downtowns and typically follow design guidelines. Municipalities can provide design services and matching grants to cover a portion of the

building's renovation costs. Funds for facade programs can be raised, or qualifying communities may choose to utilize a portion of their Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Facade programs can include physical improvements, such as painting, window replacement, awnings, or infrastructure.



Phoenixville Borough, PA received a grant to provide new street furniture and sidewalks in the downtown. Streetscape improvements are one of the several revitalization projects ongoing in the Borough including two new mixed-use projects along Bridge Street and enhancements to the Schuylkill River Trail.



The Lansdowne Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) assists business and property owners in the Lansdowne Central Business District (CBD). Facade improvements are encouraged through matching grants. Source: www.lansdownefuture.org, 2013.

Enlist Partners

Partnerships are important in creating and sustaining vibrant retail districts. Assistance is available from several different types of organizations, whether financial, educational, or operational. Explore local business assistance programs, such as college or business centers with volunteers willing to lend a hand. Outside organizations have standing relationships with existing businesses and understand their needs. They can often bring resources and capacity. Small business and entrepreneurial support programs require a level of management, capitalization, and industry expertise not found in local government.

Potential Partners

- ✦ Colleges and universities;
- ✦ Small Business Development Centers;
- ✦ SCORE – Service Corps of Retired Executives is a nonprofit group of retired business owners who donate their time as business counselors. They provide free and confidential business advice and workshops for start-up and existing businesses;
- ✦ Entrepreneur Works offers one-on-one technical assistance, business training, and networking opportunities;
- ✦ Community groups;
- ✦ Global connections (e.g., U.S. Export Assistance Center);
- ✦ Business groups (local chamber of commerce); and
- ✦ Financing institutions (credit unions, national banks, microloan organizations, Community Development Financial Institutions, and venture/angel investors).

Partnering with a Local College or University

The Hackettstown, NJ, Business Improvement District (BID) and Centenary College developed a program for merchandising and fashion students to apply their education creating store window displays and assisting retailers with professional window design in downtown Hackettstown. To help build awareness of the program, the BID organized a holiday window display contest, which was judged by local shoppers. This provided the retailers a great way to publicize their store, and provided the students a way to connect to the community.

Track Success

Simply put, one cannot manage what is not measurable. In the early stage of planning, the community's retail goals should be clearly defined. These goals are the criteria for measuring success. If the goal is increased revenue, then measure the return on investment. If the goal is to create a unique shopping experience, then provide surveys to shoppers to gauge their opinions. Make sure metrics rely upon the same source each time and a set time period is given for the measurement.

Below is a list of questions that should be revisited frequently.

Have the community's demographics changed?

- ✦ What, if any, impact has immigration had?
- ✦ Is the population increasing?
- ✦ Has the community's buying power changed?

What is the current market?

- ✦ Is the retail district attracting more dollars than last year?
- ✦ How are neighboring communities doing? Is there competition for the same dollars?
- ✦ Should the current supply and demand be reevaluated?

Are the correct regulatory, financial, and design incentives provided?

- ✦ Was a small business loan program created?
- ✦ Who has utilized the facade program? The tax abatement program?

Chapter Five: Evaluating Retail Supply and Demand

Retail is a limited commodity; therefore, it is important to know the market. A market assessment can help identify any unmet retail demand. Market assessments simply measure whether there is unmet retail demand in the downtown. Once the vital information needed by potential retailers is collected, take stock of what already exists in the downtown and where there may be an unmet need for a particular retail sector. This allows targeting future growth.

Supply Side of Retail

Step 1: Determine the Supply

Simply complete a retail inventory by walking around the retail district and writing down each retail space's business name, address, square footage, and retail category. Be sure to denote when there is a vacancy. Include nonretail businesses utilizing any retail space, such as an insurance company or a doctor's office.

To determine the total amount of retail space occupied by tenants for each retail category, simply add together all of the square footage occupied by NG&S tenants, F&B tenants, and GAFO tenants.

Step 2: Set the Boundaries

What are the limits of the community's retail district? The retail district should have continuous retail tenants. A solid block of retail with no vacancies is often more successful than a longer stretch with more vacancies. The district usually has a string of ground-level spaces that are activated by a use that is accessible by the public (church, daycare, and professional office). A string of large nonretail uses, such as apartment buildings, government buildings, or a park, signify the end of the retail district. The boundaries are subjective so be sure to have reasons for determining a specific start and stop.

Step 3: Conduct Retail Inventory

List all the spaces within your retail district, regardless of their existing tenant or use (see sample on Page 49). There may be some spaces occupied by offices or some that are vacant. This happens when a retail-appropriate use is occupied by a nonretail use. To ascertain if a space is "retail-appropriate," look for storefronts that do not have yards and are typically adjacent to similar looking ground-level spaces.

Calculating Existing Retail Supply

$$\begin{aligned} &(\text{NG\&S SF} + \text{F\&B SF} + \text{GAFO SF}) \\ &+ \\ &\text{Vacant SF} \\ &+ \\ &\text{Non-retail tenants SF} \end{aligned}$$

Source: Streetsense

Step 4: Identify the Retail Category

Neighborhood Goods & Services (NG&S); Food and Beverage (F&B); or General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings or Other (GAFO).

Step 5: Determine the Property Owner

Property owner names and addresses can be found at the local tax office. It is also helpful to have the business owner's name.

Step 6: Conduct Shopper Surveys

Gathering basic information about shopping patterns will help a community assess its market strengths and weaknesses. While professional marketing firms assess the sales potential of various sites, a basic shopper survey is a more cost-efficient way to do this.

Shopper surveys ask individuals about their community, including likes and dislikes about the shopping environment. While many respondents desire stores that are unrealistic (i.e., a Nordstrom), the survey can still provide

information about buying patterns and preferred locations. The survey can be done via mail, telephone, or in person.

Demand Side of Retail

Step 1: Determine Demand

Determining demand for retail relies upon competing demands from various interests, as well as the impact of existing retail in the primary and secondary trade area. An understanding of what exists within the community's trade area is the first step in the process. Retailers rely on formulas when evaluating trade areas, such as the number of households with a certain median income within a certain distance of their site. This formula often changes depending on the type of retail store. To assess what is within the trade area, start with a map delineating nearby shopping areas and other retail.

Market demand must be calculated for each type of retail separately, as the total expenditures, capture rate, and sales per square foot will vary. Create a spreadsheet for each category (grocery, apparel, dining out, etc.), using the retail demand formula.

Savvy retailers and office tenants evaluate a community's market potential before locating. Market considerations often take precedence over site considerations because without demand, the availability of a retail-appropriate

site is irrelevant. The top two criteria for locating in an established community are foot traffic and overall accessibility, followed by the spending power of the surrounding neighborhood.

Pedestrian Counts

For urban locations, pedestrian counts are vital. Food and Beverage (F&B) retailers have the greatest interest in pedestrian and bicycle counts for two reasons: F&B retailers, such as coffee, ice cream, or sandwich shops, rely on passersby who will make impulsive purchase decisions and; for sit-down dining establishments, pedestrians and bicyclists create vitality on the street.

Transit Accessibility

Within the Greater Philadelphia region, most of the successful downtown retail districts are anchored by a rail station. For NG&S and F&B retailers, proximity to a rail stop (within three to four blocks) ensures that the neighborhood's residents can frequent retail locations, such as dropping off dry cleaning on the way and from the station.

Median Household Income

Median household income is a commonly used indicator of a neighborhood's spending power. NG&S retailers have a low threshold for median household income as every socioeconomic

group needs and purchases these goods. While the cost of necessities such as groceries, and medicines, is the same for everyone, regardless of income, the percentage of household spending that goes to these types of basic goods and services influences retailer location.

F&B retailers need customers that have disposable income after they buy their basic goods. GAFO retailers have the highest threshold for median income because consumers will generally not buy clothes, furniture, or a computer until they have satisfied their basic needs and still have disposable income.

Population

For NG&S, the population threshold is relatively low; everybody needs basic goods and services. F&B retailers require a larger population, since most people eat out, but enjoy variety in their dining choices. GAFO retailers are looking for a large population with unmet demand. These stores require shoppers to make more expensive purchases less often. They need to generate a sufficient volume of business to sustain a store.

Daytime Population

Approximately 15 percent of household purchases originate from the workplace. Therefore, daytime population is looked upon as important especially for F&B retailers who

wish to capture a time-limited lunch crowd. NG&S tenants need a lower threshold population during the day. F&B retailers seek higher densities of daytime population. GAFO tenants are not concerned with daytime population, as they do not rely on the workforce to make big purchases during their lunch hour. Most F&B retailers also need weekend population to sustain themselves.

Educational Attainment

NG&S retailers like to see secondary education levels for potential higher-income customers, but they are mostly concerned with the concentration of high school graduates as a potential workforce for their stores.

Vehicular Traffic Counts

Average Automobile Daily Trips (AADT), or traffic counts, are used by retailers as an indicator of how visible a potential site is. The minimum threshold depends upon the size of the trade area needed. NG&S retailers depend heavily on local customers and therefore can pursue areas with lower traffic counts. (Pedestrian counts for NG&S retailers are more important). Customers generally like to shop for basic goods and services close to home; therefore, car commuters are not important to NG&S. GAFO retailers attract customers from a much larger area. Most people purchase jewelry, furniture, and electronics infrequently, and high

traffic counts equate to exposure for potential customers.

Retail Competition

NG&S retailers seek out areas where they will be surrounded by complementary tenants, though not those offering the same good or service. F&B retailers want to be surrounded by other F&B retailers, as a cluster of food options drives more vehicular traffic. GAFO retailers are somewhere in the middle. Similar stores that attract similar customers are ideal, but direct competition too close can draw price shopping.

Overlap

When a store opens up a second location too close, it is referred to as “cannibalization.” For NG&S retailers, cannibalization is not a concern. F&B retailers also have flexibility. Because of the large trade area for GAFO retailers, they are the most affected by cannibalization. Two locations of the same retailer may split sales and leave both stores unprofitable.

Step 2: Configure Trade Areas

Trade area is the portion of the larger region from which the retail will draw most of its customers. Trade areas often overlap, which can cause any downtown to struggle if nestled between adjacent downtowns with successful retail, or even a regional mall. Trade areas are categorized into primary, secondary, and tertiary zones for existing competition and are natural for transportation options. Trade areas vary depending on the type and size of the center and location of its competition. When measuring trade areas, travel time is more important than physical distance. The number of shoppers willing to travel long distances for convenience NG&S goods drops dramatically. A community that offers both everyday goods and destination goods will capture multiple markets. In general, an urban retailer will draw from up to a half mile away, a suburban retailer will attract customers from one to three miles away; and a rural area will pull from a maximum of 25 miles away. Travel times can be estimated by driving through the trade area in typical weather conditions and traffic situations. Figure 8 illustrates how to graphically show competing retail districts.



0-3 miles



3-7 miles



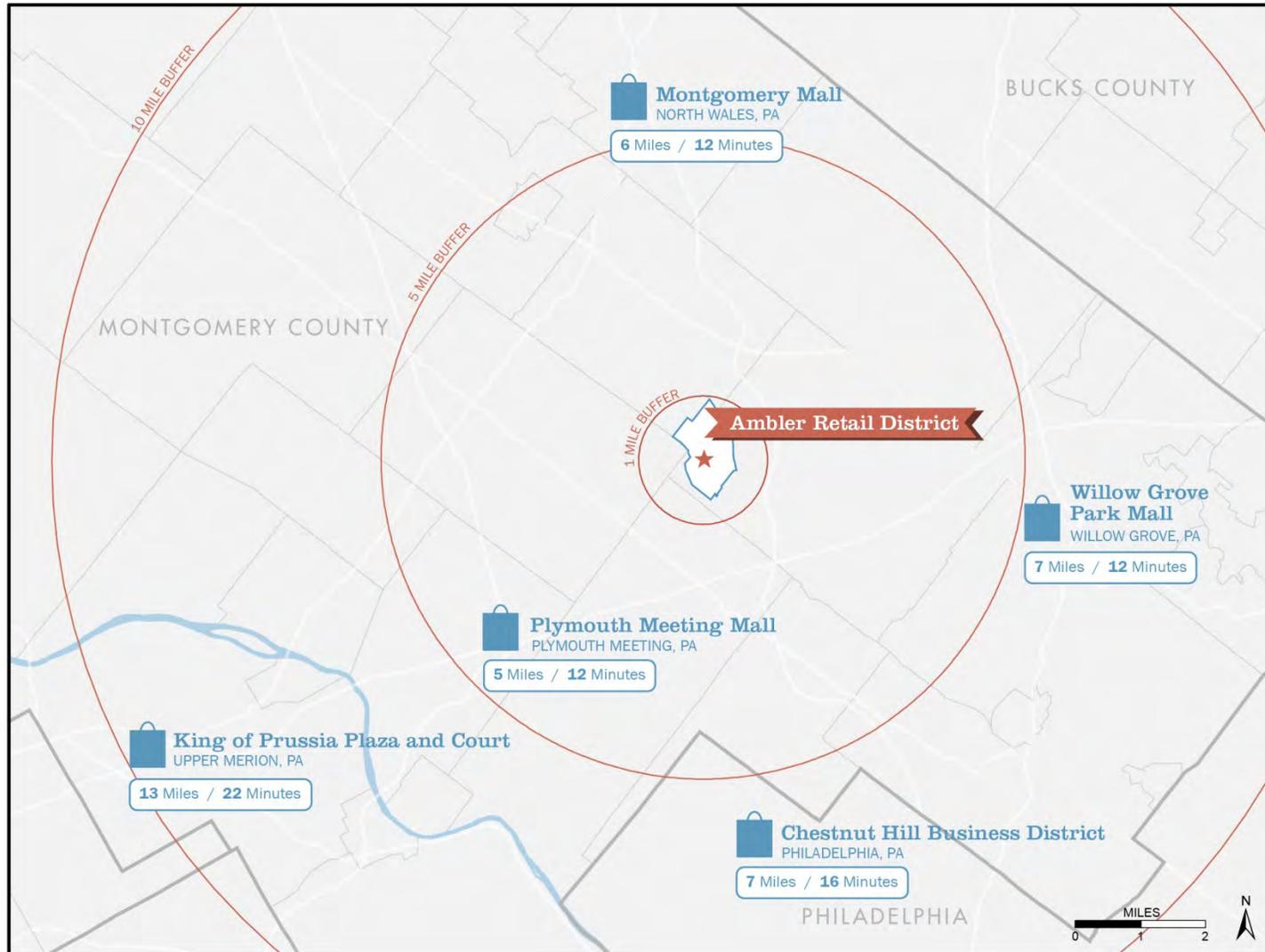
Up to 15 miles

Primary Trade Area: typically draws up to 75 percent of consumers from about three miles or less. Retailers consider their primary trade area as the area in which they can most significantly penetrate the market. Therefore, it is the primary trade area that is most important when considering a tenant's position in the market and merchandising.

Secondary Trade Area: typically draws 10 to 20 percent of consumers from three to seven miles. This area is generally less defensible from competition. The range of the secondary trade area depends on the location of competitors and population. In areas where there are fewer retailers, the secondary trade area may extend farther. Secondary trade areas are critical when evaluating the market for F&B establishments and GAFO.

Tertiary Trade Area typically draws the fewest consumers and extends up to 15 miles in major metropolitan areas to 50 miles in less-populated regions. It is the most difficult area to pinpoint and may also include tourists or shoppers from out of town. Tertiary trade areas are critical when evaluating the market for GAFO.

Figure 8: Sample Trade Area Map



The trade area map of the Ambler retail district shows the designated boundaries of the retail district, with a circle encapsulating a one-mile radius, assuming the downtown retail district will draw from the primary trade zone. Competition is strong for this district, as there are four super regional malls within 13 miles and another destination retail district, Chestnut Hill, within seven miles. Source: DVRPC, 2013.

Step 3: Gather Spending Data

Expenditures measure the amount of sales for a particular item. To determine the current retail demand, a Consumer Spending Report is needed. The Consumer Spending Report estimates how households in the trade areas are spending within different retail categories. Claritas/Nielsen is a leader in consumer spending reports. When contacting them for this information, the drawn trade area from which to pull the information is needed.

Step 4: Calculate Sales per Square Foot

Table 3 provides estimated sales per square foot figures by major retail categories. When a more reliable number to use for a category is unavailable, \$300 per square foot can serve as a guide for market-estimating purposes. Sales-per-square-foot estimates vary based on the region and community type (urban, suburban, and rural).

Calculating Retail Demand

Total Consumer expenditures within trade area

X

Estimated Capture Rate / Sales per SF = Square feet of retail Demand

Example: \$10,000,000 x 10%/\$250 per SF = 4,000 SF

Source: Streetsense

To diagnose sales in the community's retail district, gauge these sales numbers against the market average retail lease rate. A local real estate agent may be able to provide this information. As a general rule, rent per square foot equals 10 percent of sales per square foot (with variations for type of retail).

Table 3: Estimated Sales per Square Foot

Grocery	\$425
Drugstore	\$284
Liquor/Wine	\$256
Food and Beverage	\$368
Clothing and Accessories	\$237
Books & Music	\$158
Home Furnishings	\$289
Hobby/Special Interest	\$192
Electronics	\$380

Source: Streetsense

Step 5: Determine the Capture Rate

Table 4 outlines sample capture rates for each retail category, which trade area is impacted, and what other factors to consider. Capture rate indicates the estimated percentage of expenditures that can be attracted to a given location. Potential capture rates are based on typical performance by retailers in each retail category and the strength of the competition

Table 4: Sample Capture Rates

Retail Category	Baseline Capture Rate (10%)	Impacted Trade Area	Additional Factors to Consider
Grocery	Product of the # of existing grocery stores	Primary	Available parking
Drugstores	Product of the # of existing drugstores (<30%)	Primary	Available parking
Wine, Liquor Stores	Product of the # of existing stores (<25%)	Primary	State regulations
Food & Beverage	<25%	Secondary	Quality dining experience
Apparel	<15%	Secondary	Apparel
Bookstores	<8%	Tertiary	Nearby regional mall
Electronics	<12%	Tertiary	Nearby big box electronics
Home Furnishings/Decor	<10%	Tertiary	Home values in excess of 4x median household income

Source: Streetsense

existing in each retail category. Each retail category begins at a baseline capture rate (10 percent) and is then adjusted based on the competition in the surrounding area.

Evaluation

Once the supply and demand calculations are complete, subtract the supply from the demand to determine the unmet demand. Sample equation is shown in Table 5.

The unmet demand does not mean much unless translated. How many square feet actually equal a new grocery store, boutique, or eating establishment? Using the average store

size chart shown in Table 6, communities can determine what type of retail they can support. In the case of the sample community used in Table 5, they can support a small boutique style store (GAFO), a sit down and quick bite food establishment (F&B) and one or two neighborhood goods and services. Remember to evaluate the trade area needed for each category. Table 6 shows the average store size by font color which corresponds to the size of the trade area needed: blue represents the stores that are supported by the primary trade area; gray represents stores that are supported by the secondary trade area; and the black font represents the tertiary trade area.

The difference in the supply and demand reveals the condition of the retail district. An environment with more demand than supply in a particular retail category is considered “underserved” for that type of retail, and therefore capable of supporting retail growth. An area with more retail supply than demand is considered “oversupplied.” Under these conditions, it is not unusual for the quality of retail in the area to be diminished and the business sales margins to be low. Understanding whether the community is underserved or oversupplied is critical when targeting new retailers or developing plans for vacant buildings.

Table 5: Sample Unmet Demand Calculation

Retail Category	Estimated Demand	- Existing Supply	= Unmet Demand
NG&S	23,200 sf	20,100 sf	3,100 sf
F&B	43,300 sf	32,000 sf	11,300 sf
GAFO	14,500 sf	12,800 sf	1,700 sf
Total	81,000 sf	64,900 sf	16,100 sf

Source: Streetsense

Table 6: Average Store Size

Boutique	1,200 – 2,400 sf
Quick-Bite Food	1,200 – 3,600 sf
Sit-Down Dining	2,400 – 9,000 sf
Drugstore	6,000 – 10,000 sf
Grocery Store	25,000 – 60,000 sf
Big Box (specialty)	15,000 – 120,000 sf

Source: Streetsense

Conclusion

Older retail districts come in a variety of sizes, are in different stages of life, and offer distinct constraints and opportunities. Regardless, with proper planning and realistic goals, communities can turn their retail districts into vibrant and unique places for residents and visitors to experience.

The field work and data collection of the 71 retail districts in the Delaware Valley revealed that many of the region’s older communities struggle to compete with regional and big box stores. Many have invested in the streetscape and programming but have failed to address the types of retail and nonretail. While

vacancies may be under 20 percent in certain districts, GAFO uses dominate many of the retail districts, pulling from a more dispersed customer base. Given the competitive nature of retail, there appears to be potential for at least NG&S types of retail in all suburban retail districts within the study. Local officials should begin with the factors identified as highly relevant to start the revitalization process. DVRPC hopes that municipalities will be able to apply the recommendations and continue to make the older suburbs in Greater Philadelphia aesthetically pleasing, vital places to shop.



Bryn Mawr, PA, (left) and Princeton, NJ, (right) are all considered great retail districts based on the findings of this report. Communities can learn from the successes this report has illustrated.

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Abstract: Many land use and zoning policies address retail and commercial development, but often fall short of creating and sustaining a thriving retail district that fits the needs of the surrounding population. Through the Strategies for Older Suburbs work program, staff compiled information about 71 downtown retail districts in an effort to learn what elements were common among successful older suburban retail districts. Short- and long-term strategies were then developed to help local officials maintain and revive these districts and further their economic development goals.



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