

Diverse Downtowns

75 of the region's downtowns were analyzed, and each were assigned a Diversity Score and a Pandemic Impact Score on scales of 1–100, with one being the most diverse and least impacted.

This effort found that more diverse downtowns were generally less impacted by the economic shutdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All 75 of the downtowns that were analyzed are listed, along with their Pandemic Impact Scores, in order from most to least diverse.



Disclaimer:
This is an analysis of visits to and trade areas of the region's downtowns. However, it is not an economic impact analysis. Retail sales were not part of this body of work.

Princeton | 33
West Chester Borough | 34
Norristown Borough | 37
Burlington City | 46
Collingswood Borough | 45
Upper Darby Township | 32
Lower Merion Township (Ardmore) | 38
Glassboro Borough | 39
Phoenixville Borough | 44
Haddonfield Borough | 35
Woodbury City | 43
Lansdowne Borough | 49
Trenton (State Street) | 58
Bristol Borough | 26
Lansdale Borough | 54
Doylestown Borough | 29
Bordentown City | 52
Riverside Township | 59
Mount Holly Township | 48
Kennett Square Borough | 48
Chester City (Avenue of the States) | 41
New Hope Borough | 14
Swarthmore Borough | 60
Media Borough | 40
Gloucester City | 50

Pottstown Borough | 39
Coatesville City | 56
Moorestown Township | 54
Paulsboro Borough | 58
Swedesboro Borough | 43
Pitman Borough | 50
Lower Merion Township (Bryn Mawr) | 54
Quakertown Borough | 35
Philadelphia (52nd Street) | 33
Radnor Township (Wayne) | 50
Ambler Borough | 61
Palmyra Borough | 47
Marcus Hook Borough | 57
Malvern Borough | 45
Narberth Borough | 59
Downingtown Borough | 42
Haddon Township (Westmont) | 38
Merchantville Borough | 52
Pennsauken Township | 49
Camden City (Federal Street) | 42
Sellersville Borough | 75
Darby Borough | 55
Maple Shade Township | 58
Harrison Township (Mullica Hill) | 27
Langhorne Borough | 52

Newtown Borough | 42
Berlin Borough | 61
Norwood Borough | 67
Hightstown Borough | 55
Haddon Heights Borough | 58
Hatboro Borough | 47
Ridley Park Borough | 69
Perkasie Borough | 53
Audubon Borough (Merchant St.) | 58
Pine Hill Borough | 59
Jenkintown Borough | 52
Lower Merion Township (Haverford) | 75
Riverton Borough | 70
Cheltenham Township (Glenside) | 55
Yardley Borough | 49
Souderton Borough | 73
Haverford Township (Oakmont) | 59
Morrisville Borough | 60
Telford Borough | 59
Westville Borough | 64
Wenonah Borough | 58
Barrington Borough | 74
Haverford Township (Brookline) | 66
East Lansdowne Borough | 60
Laurel Springs Borough | 81

Characteristics that **reduced** the pandemic's impact:

Downtowns with the following characteristics were generally less impacted by the pandemic than their peers.

Development

Recent mixed-use, residential, and retail developments within the downtowns increased diversity as well as resiliency.

Diversity

Downtowns with diverse built environments, demographics, local economies, mix of uses, and transportation options, were less impacted.

People

Diverse and permanent residential populations located within the downtowns provided retailers with customers even as people stayed close to home.

Trails

Existing Circuit Trails connected downtowns with open space and enabled alternative modes of transportation.

Walkability

Historic downtowns with more pedestrian-friendly built environments had greater resiliency.

Characteristics that **exacerbated** the pandemic's impact:

Downtowns that lacked the characteristics found to reduce the pandemic's impact, or that were more greatly defined by the following characteristics, were generally more impacted by the pandemic than their peers.

Cars

Auto-oriented downtowns with lower Walk Scores and more cars per household were more impacted by the pandemic.

Colleges

Downtowns that are overly-reliant on these anchor institutions were less resilient during the pandemic.

Goods & Services

As the share of Neighborhood Goods & Services (NGS) retailers increased in a downtown, so did the pandemic's impact.

Transit

The pandemic significantly reduced transit ridership, and this impact had a ripple effect in transit-oriented downtowns.

Vacancy

The pandemic had a greater impact as downtown vacancy rates increased.

Diverse Downtowns | Swarthmore Borough, PA

For the 75 downtowns analyzed, each were assigned a Diversity Score and a Pandemic Impact Score on scales of 1—100, with one being the most diverse and least impacted. The more diverse downtowns were generally less impacted by the pandemic.

Swarthmore has a relatively walkable downtown with a robust residential population. The downtown also has a low vacancy rate, and a number of civic and cultural uses. Development in recent years has also helped diversify the overall mix of uses. These qualities are why Swarthmore received a Diversity Score of 43, which indicates that it is more diverse than the average downtown.

Despite its relative diversity, Swarthmore received a Pandemic Impact Score of 60, which makes it one of the most impacted downtowns in the region. This is most likely due in part to the pandemic's impacts on both the daytime population at Swarthmore College as well as on SEPTA ridership.

43

Diversity Score

Built environment, mix of uses, population, transportation, and types of downtowns

60

Pandemic Impact Score

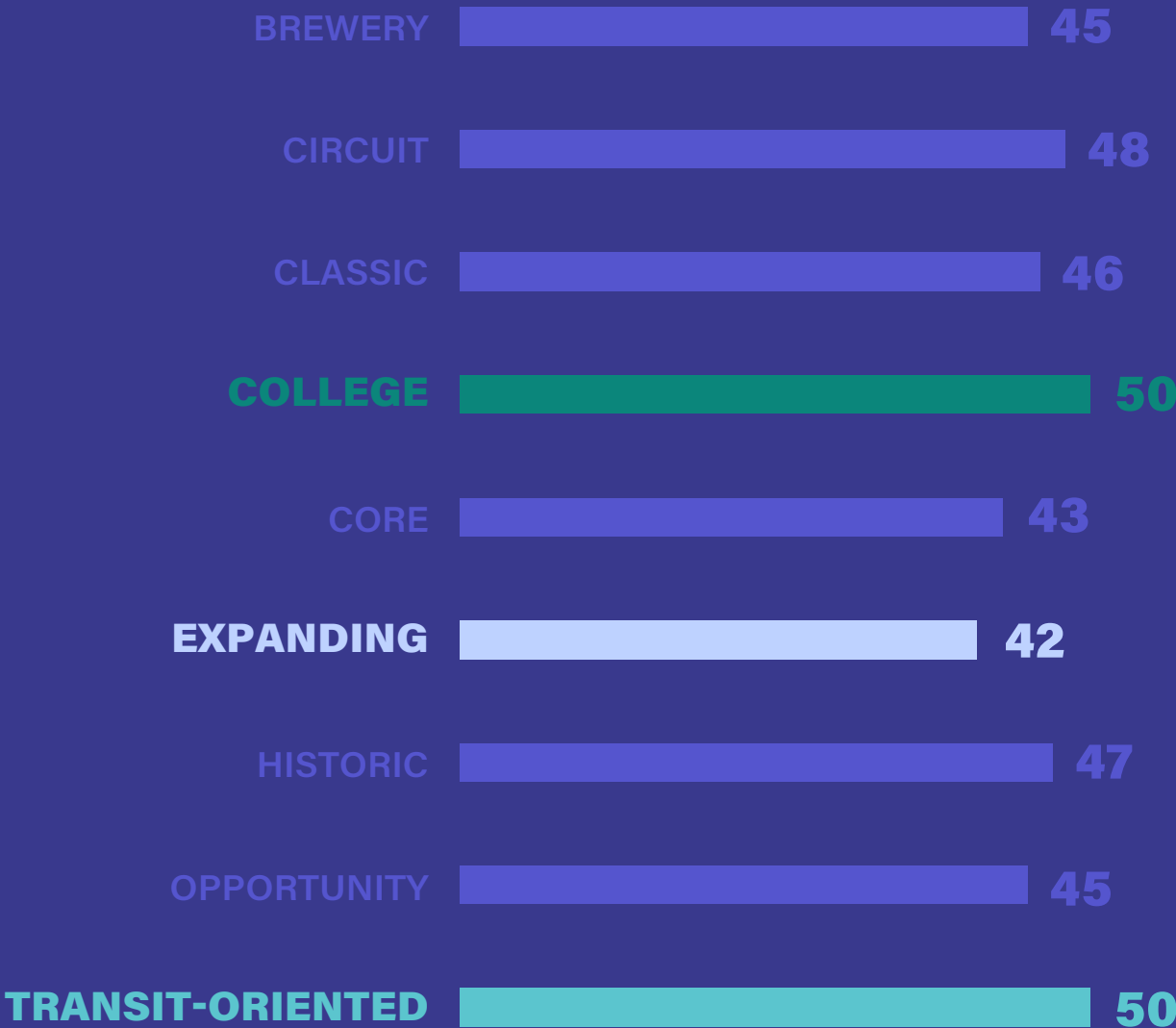
Visits and trade area pre-pandemic, and during the shut-down and reopening periods

Downtown Typologies

Nine downtown typologies were identified and the average Pandemic Impact Score was determined for each: *Brewery* (45), *Circuit* (48), *Classic* (46), *College* (50), *Core* (43), *Expanding* (42), *Historic* (47), *Opportunity* (45), and *Transit-Oriented* (50).

In general, more typologies equated to a lower Pandemic Impact Score. Swarthmore is considered to be three typologies: *College*, *Expanding*, and *Transit-Oriented*. Downtowns that are considered to be three typologies had an average Pandemic Impact Score of 53.

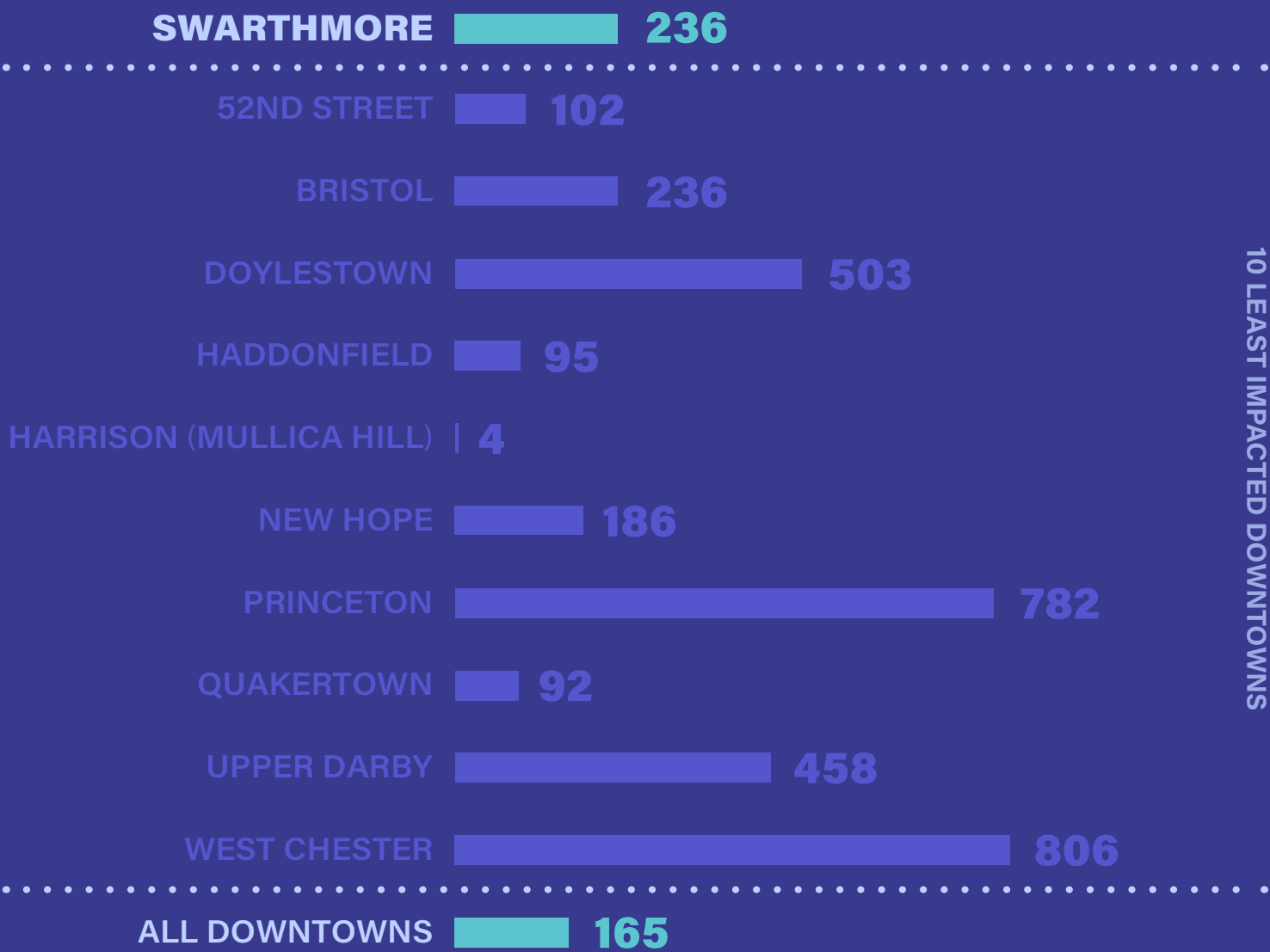
It is worth highlighting that two of the three typologies, *College* and *Transit-Oriented*, were the most impacted, and although the downtown is *Expanding*, the expansion was from development associated with the college.



Downtown Population

A negative correlation between the estimated population of the region’s downtowns and the Pandemic Impact Score was identified. In other words, the larger the downtown population, the smaller the impact.

In 2019, the population in Swarthmore’s downtown was estimated to be 236, compared to the average of 165 for all downtowns and 326 for the least impacted downtowns.



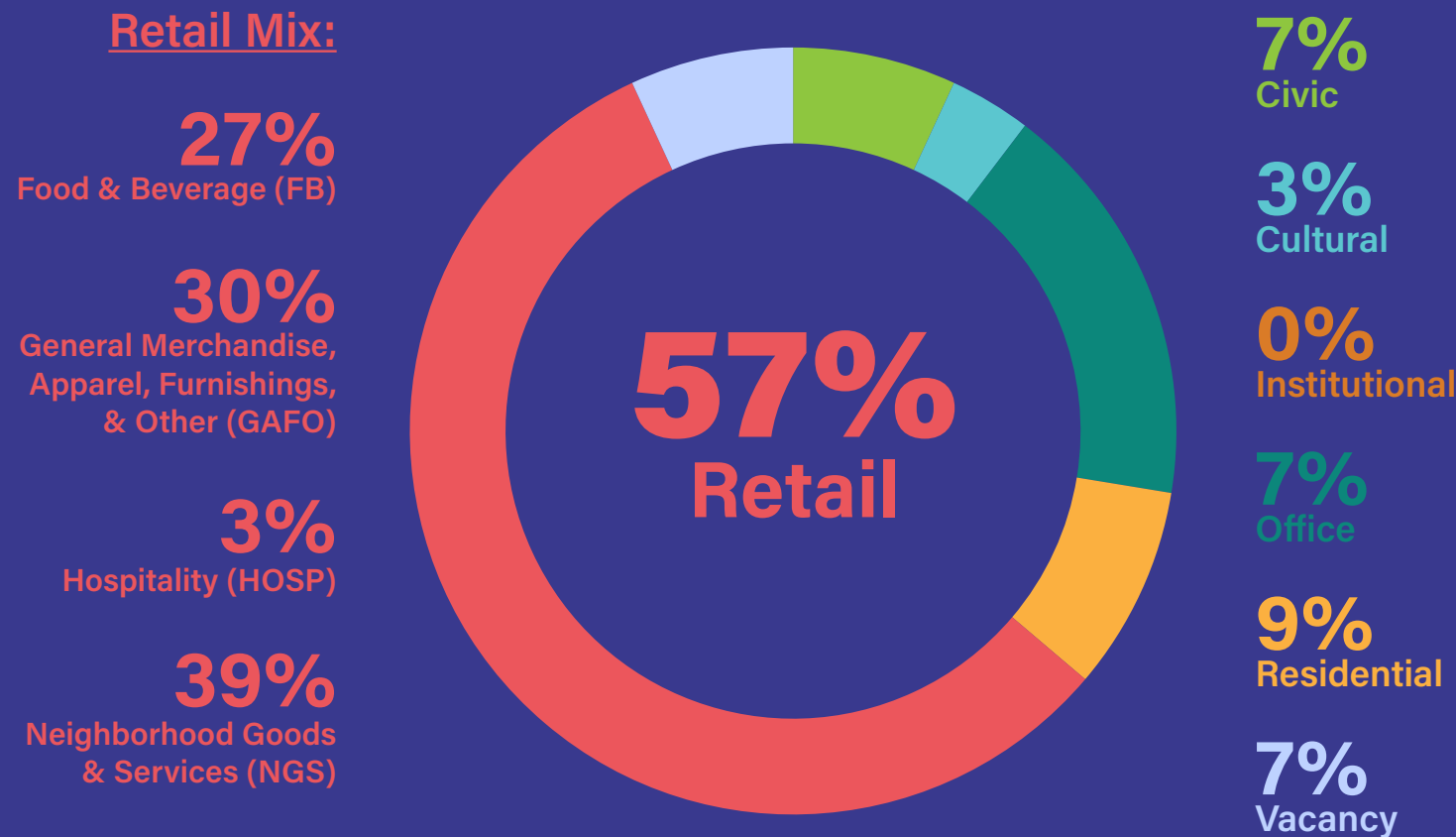
Mix of Uses

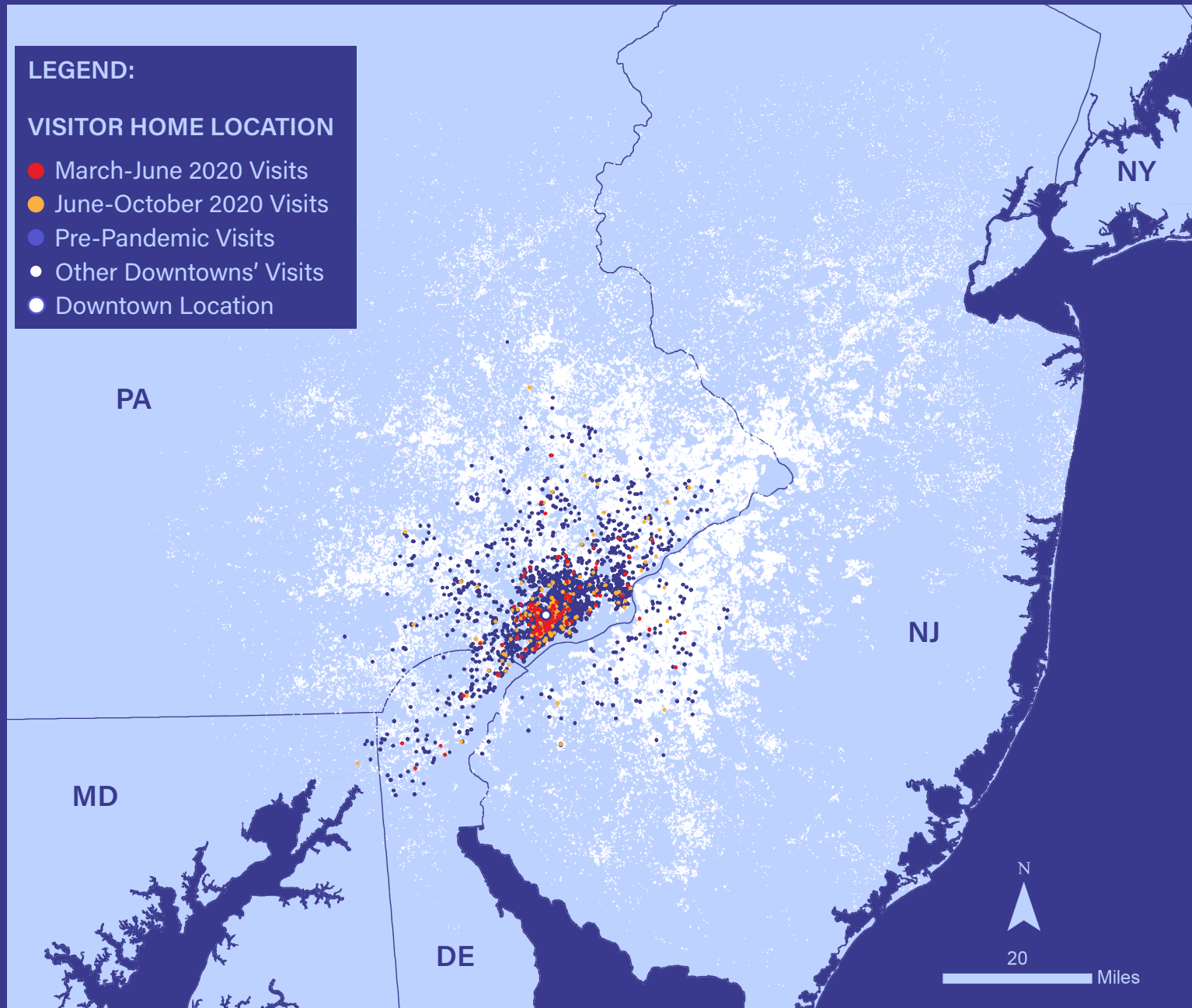
Retail accounts for 57% of the uses in Swarthmore, which is equal to the average for all downtowns and slightly less than the average of 60% for the least impacted downtowns.

In the least impacted downtowns, the share of *Food & Beverage (FB)* and *General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings & Other (GAFO)* retailers each made up larger shares at 30% and 38%, respectively. On average, as the share of each of these increased the Pandemic Impact Score decreased.

Conversely, *Neighborhood Goods & Services (NGS)* retailers made up a smaller share of 30% in the least impacted downtowns, while the average vacancy rate in the least impacted downtowns was slightly higher at 7.8%. In general, as the share of NGS retailers or the vacancy rate increased, so did the Pandemic Impact Score.

Of note, Swarthmore was one of only 24 downtowns to have a *Hospitality (HOSP)* retail use.





Visits to Downtown

Geolocated, deidentified cellphone location data was analyzed to determine the pandemic's impact on visits to the region's downtowns and their trade areas. Visits to Swarthmore were as follows:

● Pre-Pandemic

Delaware: 4.4%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.1%	Pennsylvania: 92.5%
New Jersey: 3.0%	

● Shutdown | March 13 - June 15, 2020

Delaware: 4.8%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.0%	Pennsylvania: 92.5%
New Jersey: 2.7%	

● Reopening | June 16 - October 31, 2020

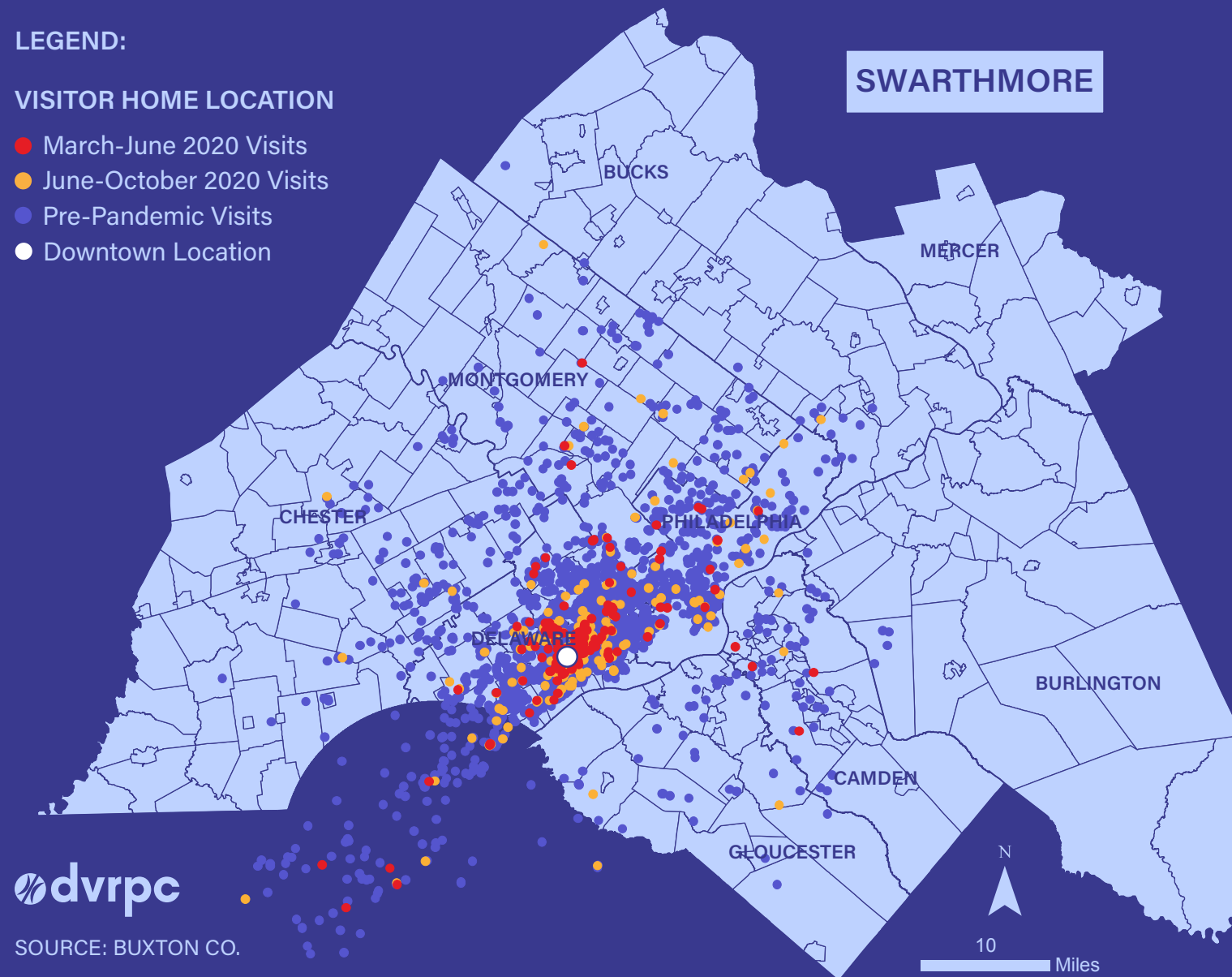
Delaware: 4.0%	New York: 0.0%
Maryland: 0.5%	Pennsylvania: 93.3%
New Jersey: 2.2%	



LEGEND:

VISITOR HOME LOCATION

- March-June 2020 Visits
- June-October 2020 Visits
- Pre-Pandemic Visits
- Downtown Location



Visits to Downtown

Before the pandemic, visitors to Swarthmore primarily came from Delaware and Philadelphia Counties, and from beyond the region as well. During the pandemic, visitors mostly came from nearby portions of Delaware County.

Between August 2018 and March 2020, 4,223 people visited the downtown, which was much less than the average of 8,800 visits for all of the downtowns.

During the shutdown (March 13 - June 15) there were 176 visits, and during the reopening period (June 16 - October 31) there were 274 visits to Swarthmore.

Shutdown Impact

March 13 - June 15, 2020

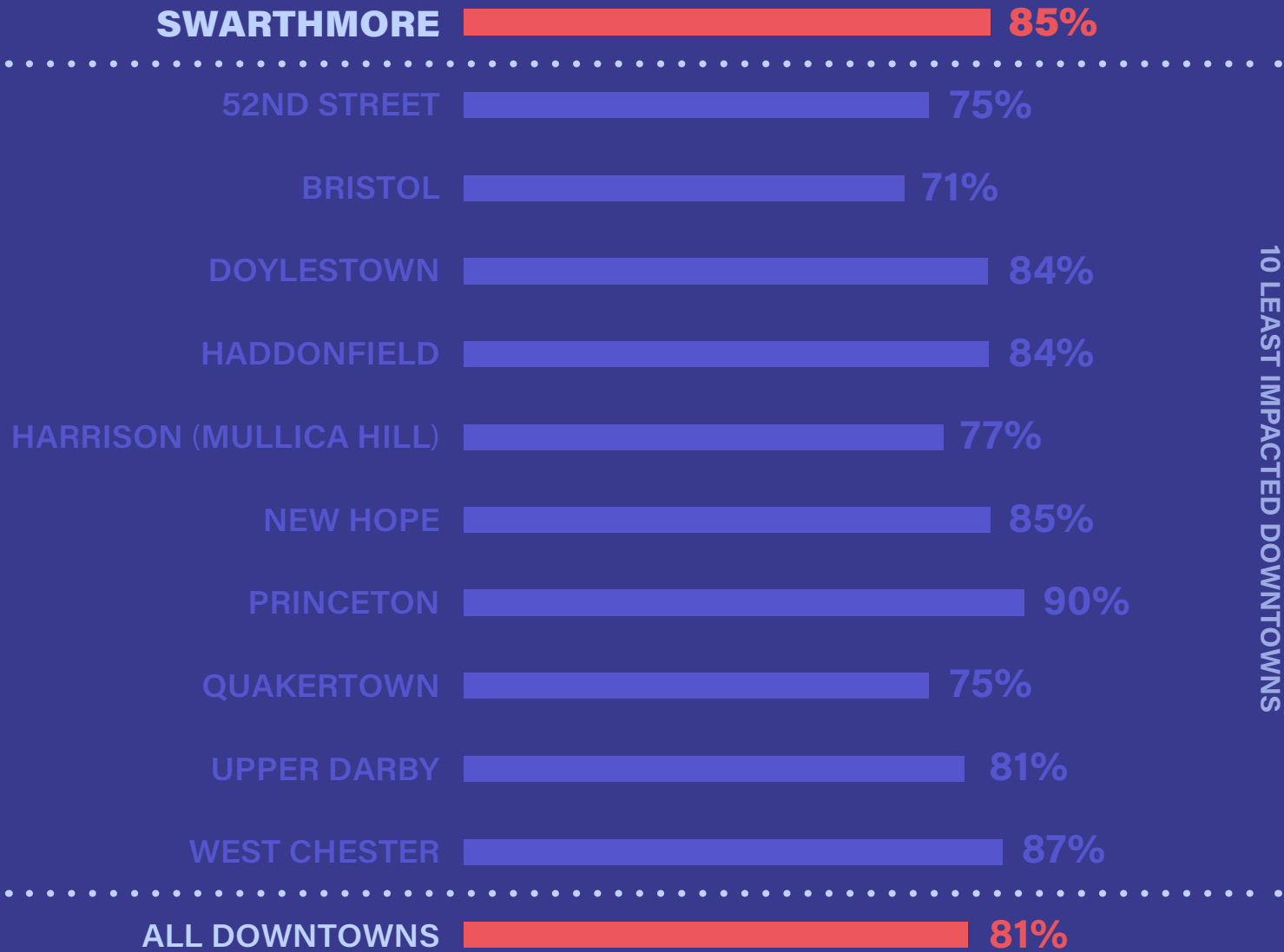
During the economic shutdown, there were 176 visits to Swarthmore compared to 1,160 visits during the same period in 2019. This equated to an 85% reduction.

The average number of visits during the shutdown period was 439 compared to 2,450 visits during the same period in 2019, which equated to an average reduction of 81%.

Gloucester City’s downtown had the smallest reduction in visits at 66%, and the average for the least impacted downtowns was 81%.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS

Reopening Rebound

June 16 - October 31, 2020

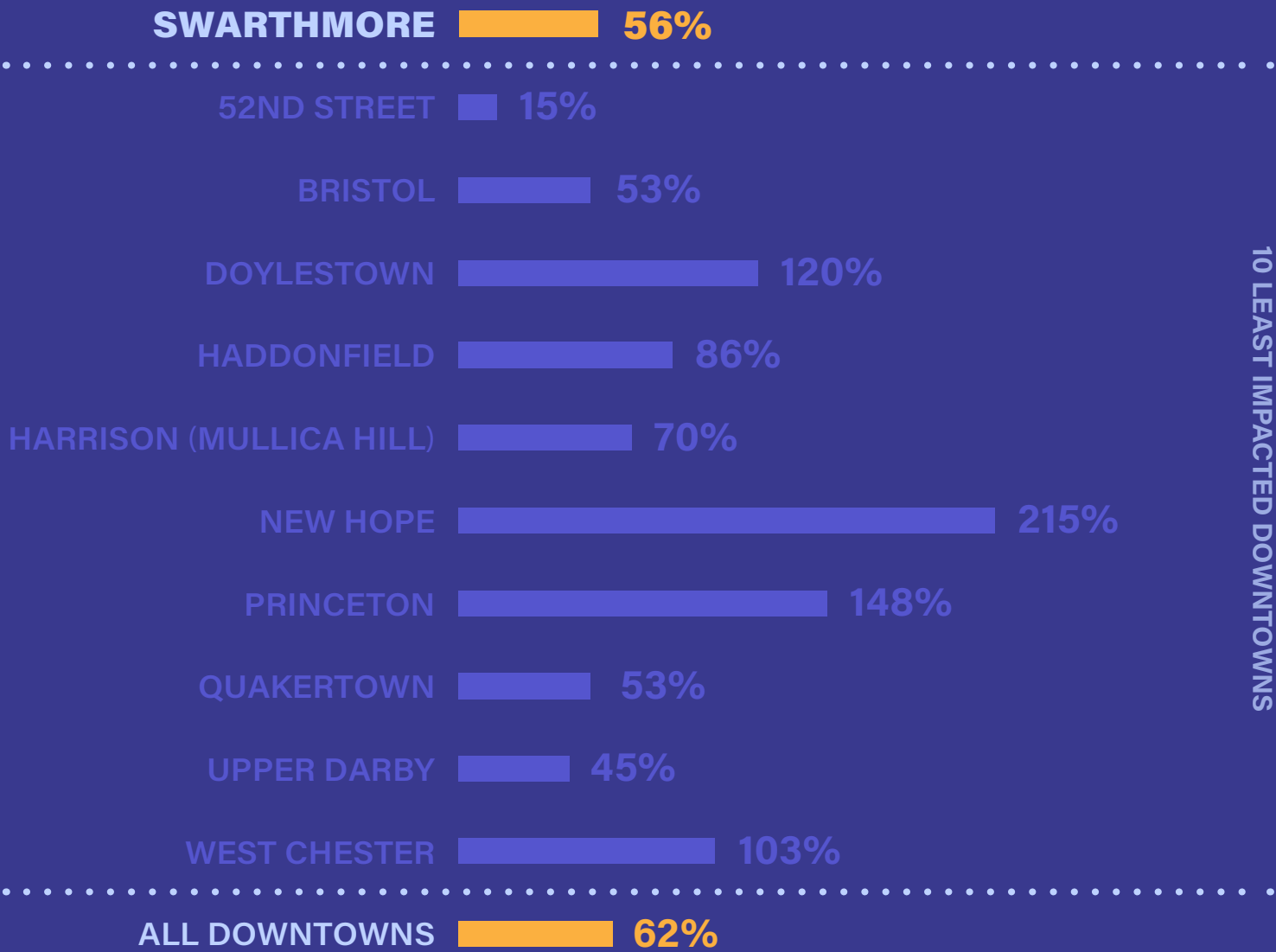
Visits to Swarthmore increased by 56% during the reopening period to a total of 274 visits. This was 80% fewer than the 1,392 visits that occurred during the same period in 2019.

On average, visits increased by 62% for all downtowns, to approximately 700 visits, and by 91% for the least impacted downtowns, to approximately 1,700 visits.

New Hope observed the greatest increase at 215%, with more than 2,800 visits during that time.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS

Trade Area Recovery

(Drive Time in Minutes)

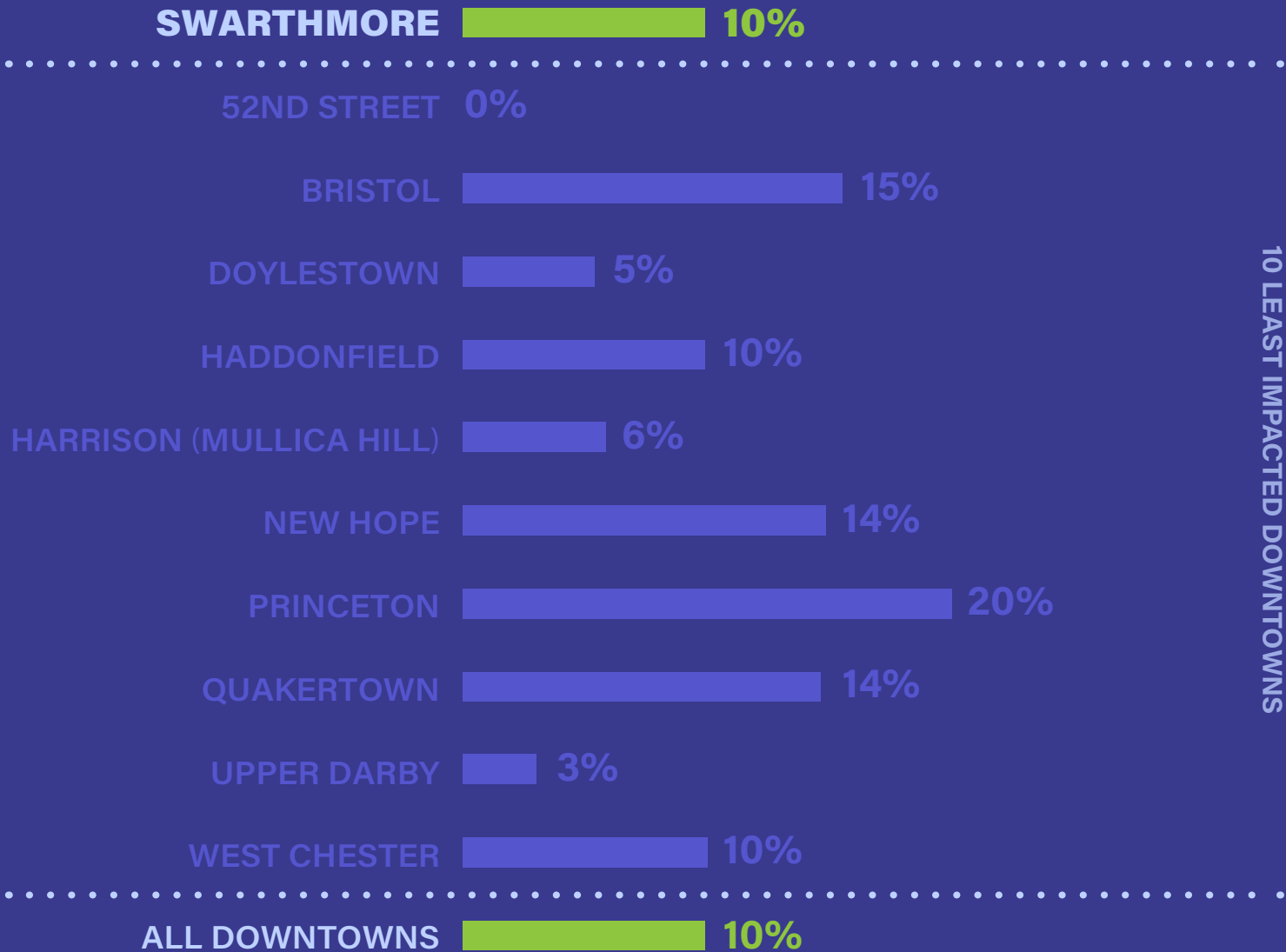
Swarthmore’s pre-pandemic trade area was a 31 minute drive time, and the trade area shrank by 19% during the shutdown to 25 minutes. During reopening, the trade area had a 3% recovery to 28 minutes.

The average pre-pandemic trade area was 31 minutes, with a 23% reduction during the shutdown down to 24 minutes. The average recovery was 10% for all downtowns up to 27 minutes.

At 69 minutes, New Hope was the only downtown with a trade area that extended beyond an hour. It was also the only downtown to have a larger trade area during reopening (72 minutes) than it did pre-pandemic.



SOURCE: BUXTON CO.



10 LEAST IMPACTED DOWNTOWNS