

9-25-2014

Comparison of MT Visitor's and MT Resident's Use of Downtowns

Norma P. Nickerson
The University of Montana-Missoula

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs

 Part of the [Leisure Studies Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nickerson, Norma P., "Comparison of MT Visitor's and MT Resident's Use of Downtowns" (2014). *Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications*. 301.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/301

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Comparison of MT visitors & MT resident's use of downtowns



ABSTRACT

An on-line survey found that only 5 of 47 downtown questions were significantly different between MT residents and visitors.

Norma Nickerson

Director, Institute for Tourism and Recreation
Research, University of Montana
Research Report 2014-18

Presentation Handout provided to the Montana Downtowns
Conference, September 25, 2014

Comparison of MT visitors & MT resident's use of downtowns

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand why people visit downtown areas while traveling and to compare Montana residents to nonresidents of Montana in their use of downtowns. An online survey was implemented to panel members of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research on June 16, 2014. Only one call for responses to participate was given resulting in 413 completed survey. Results show residents and visitors are similar in their visitation to downtown areas, what is important to them to decide to visit downtown areas while traveling, and reasons they stay away from downtown areas. Nonresidents of Montana are significantly more likely to spend time in downtown areas and shop while traveling. Additionally nonresidents are significantly more likely to stay away from downtowns without historic character, downtowns with unmaintained buildings, and downtowns with an unsafe feeling compared to Montana Residents. To improve Montana downtown areas, residents suggest to reduce the number of vacant buildings, keep it clean with trash receptacles available, and to curb the pan-handling in downtown areas. More nonresidents say Montana downtowns do not need any improvements however the other most common suggestions were to provide more parking including handicap and RV parking as well as to provide increased signage with kiosks and self-guided walking tours.

Methods

This study was an online study utilizing the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research panel members. Surveys were conducted in June, 2014 and completed by 413 respondents.

Results

One hundred fifty-three respondents were from Montana, 371 from the rest of the US, 21 from Canada and 10 from overseas. Of the US respondents, 43 states were represented (7% MN & FL; 6% WA & TX; 5% WI, IL & NY; 4% CA, IN, & MO). The remaining states had fewer than 4 percent represented in the sample.

Sixty-nine percent of visitors had visited a Montana downtown in the past.

The first question respondents were asked was to think of their favorite downtown (anywhere) and to describe why they like that downtown. Answers to the open ended question are provided at the end of this report but three examples of what the majority of respondents said are provided here.

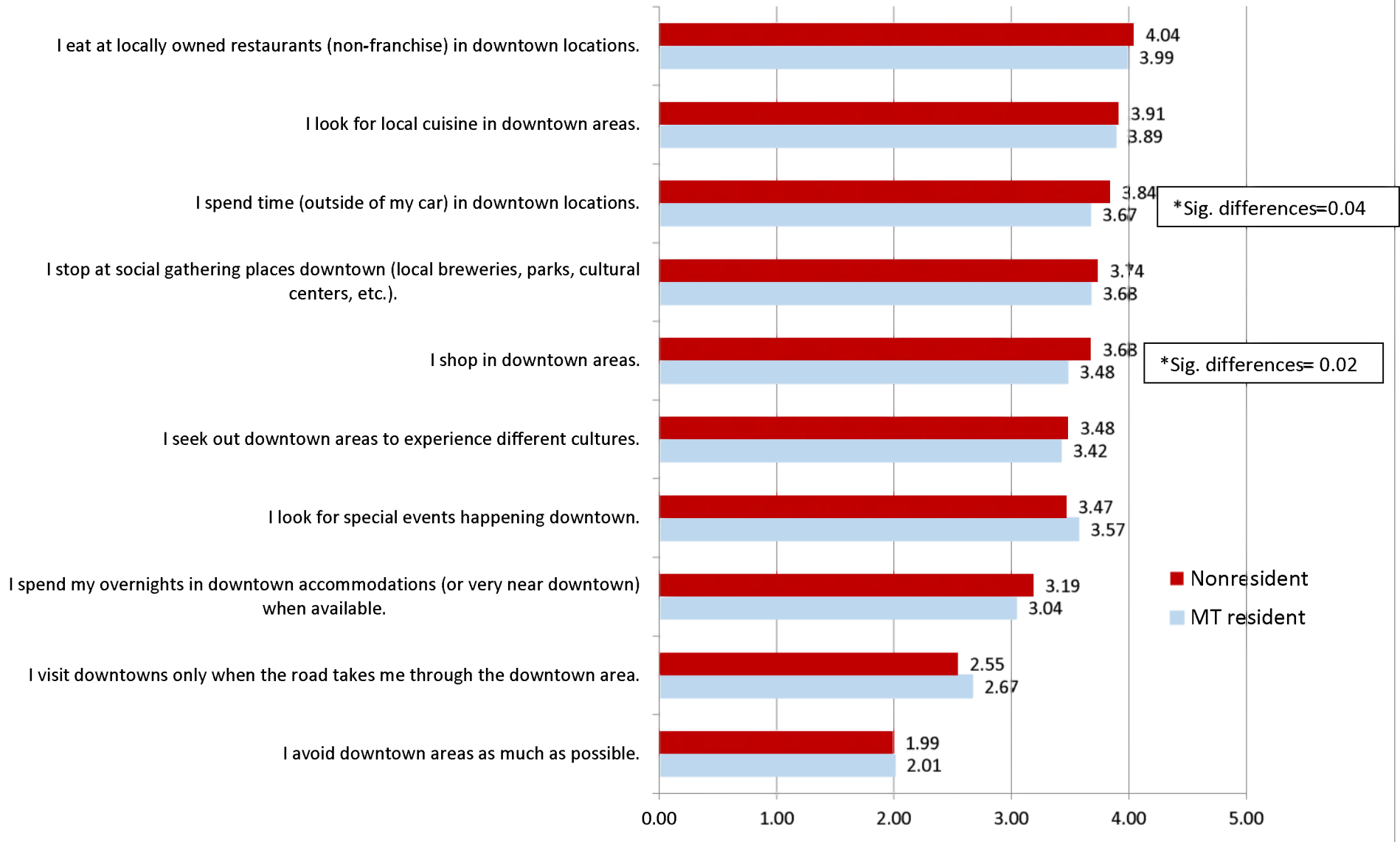
- "A downtown with unique locally owned shops. Restaurants serving food items found in that area and brew pubs selling craft beers. NO CHAIN STORES."
- ""Inviting atmosphere, buildings in good repair, clean, trees and flowers.""
- ""Walkable, interesting shops and restaurants, lots of use by locals and visitors.""

The three sets of scaled questions included: (1) 10 questions asking how often they do various things when visiting downtowns while traveling; (2) the degree of importance travelers place on 21 different variables in deciding to visit and spend time in downtowns, and; (3) 16 questions that asked them to identify the degree to which each variable keeps them away from visiting downtown areas.

Results of these three sets of questions are provided in the following three graphs. Each graph provides the mean response of what Montanan's said and what nonresidents of Montana said.

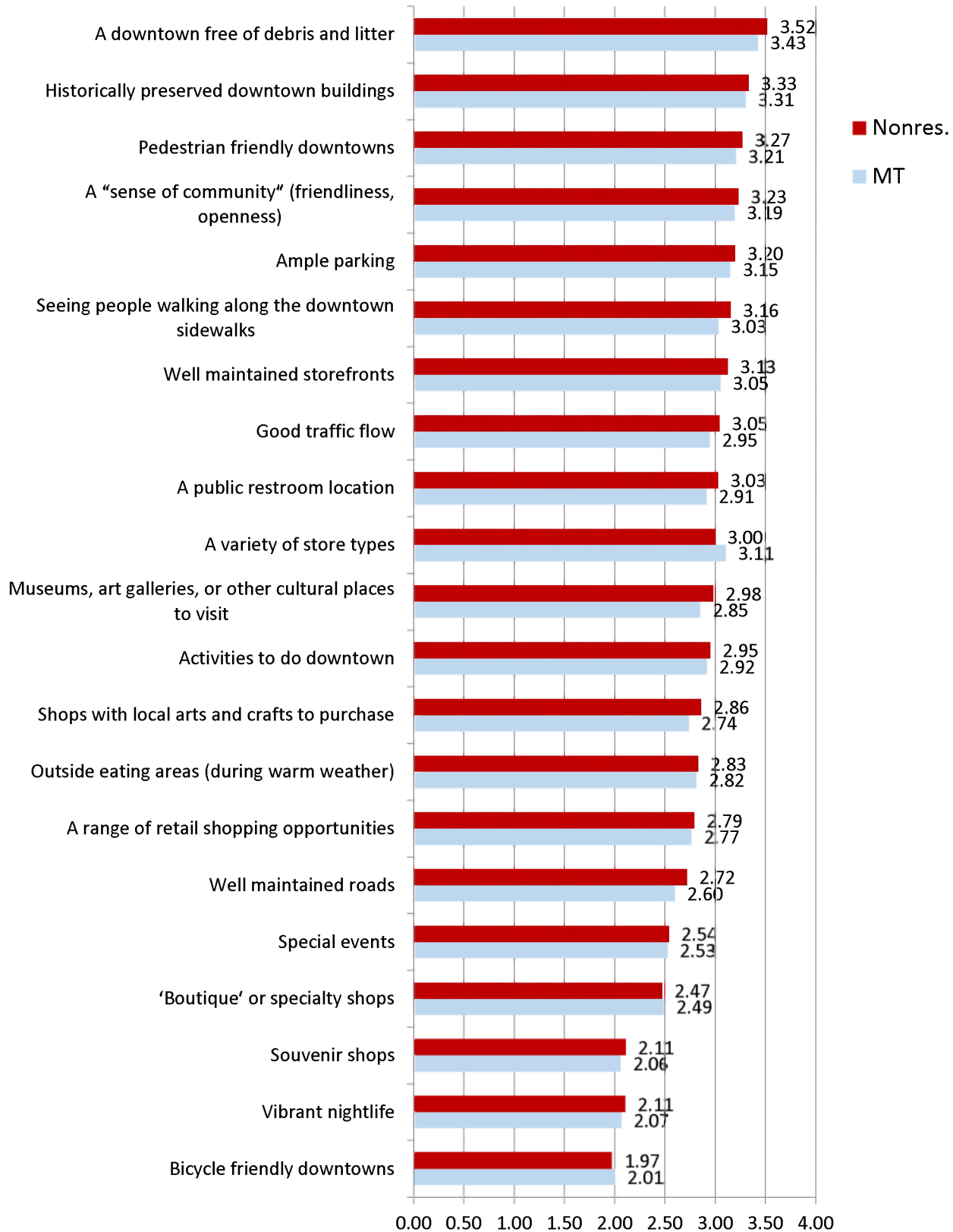
In the fourth graph, comparisons are shown between what Montana residents suggest for improvements for MT downtowns compared to nonresident suggestions. It is clear that residents are less satisfied with their downtowns since very few said "no improvements" were necessary whereas nonresident were most likely to indicate "no improvements."

When I travel...*



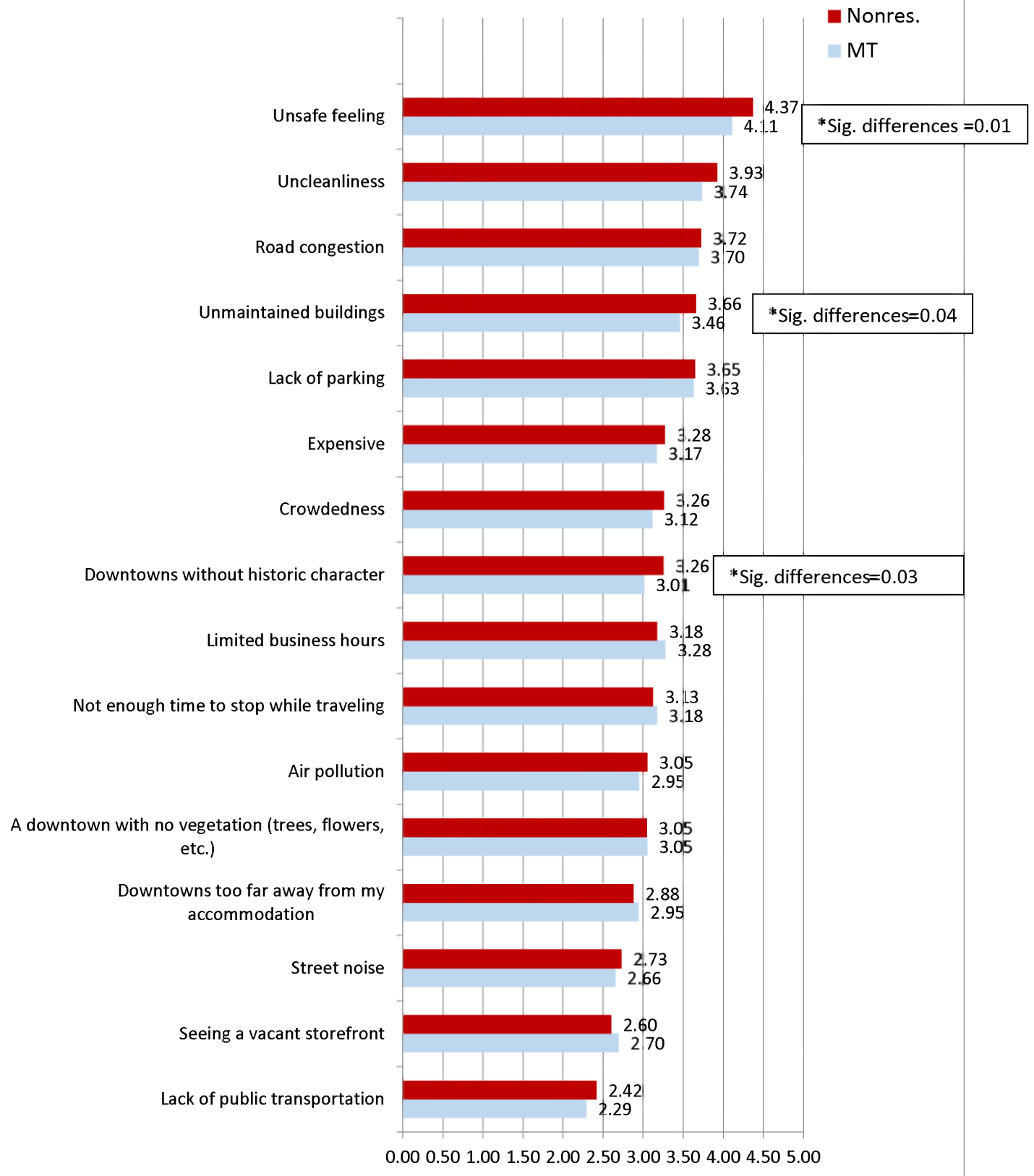
*Scale: 1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Many times; 5=Almost always

Importance for decision to visit downtowns*



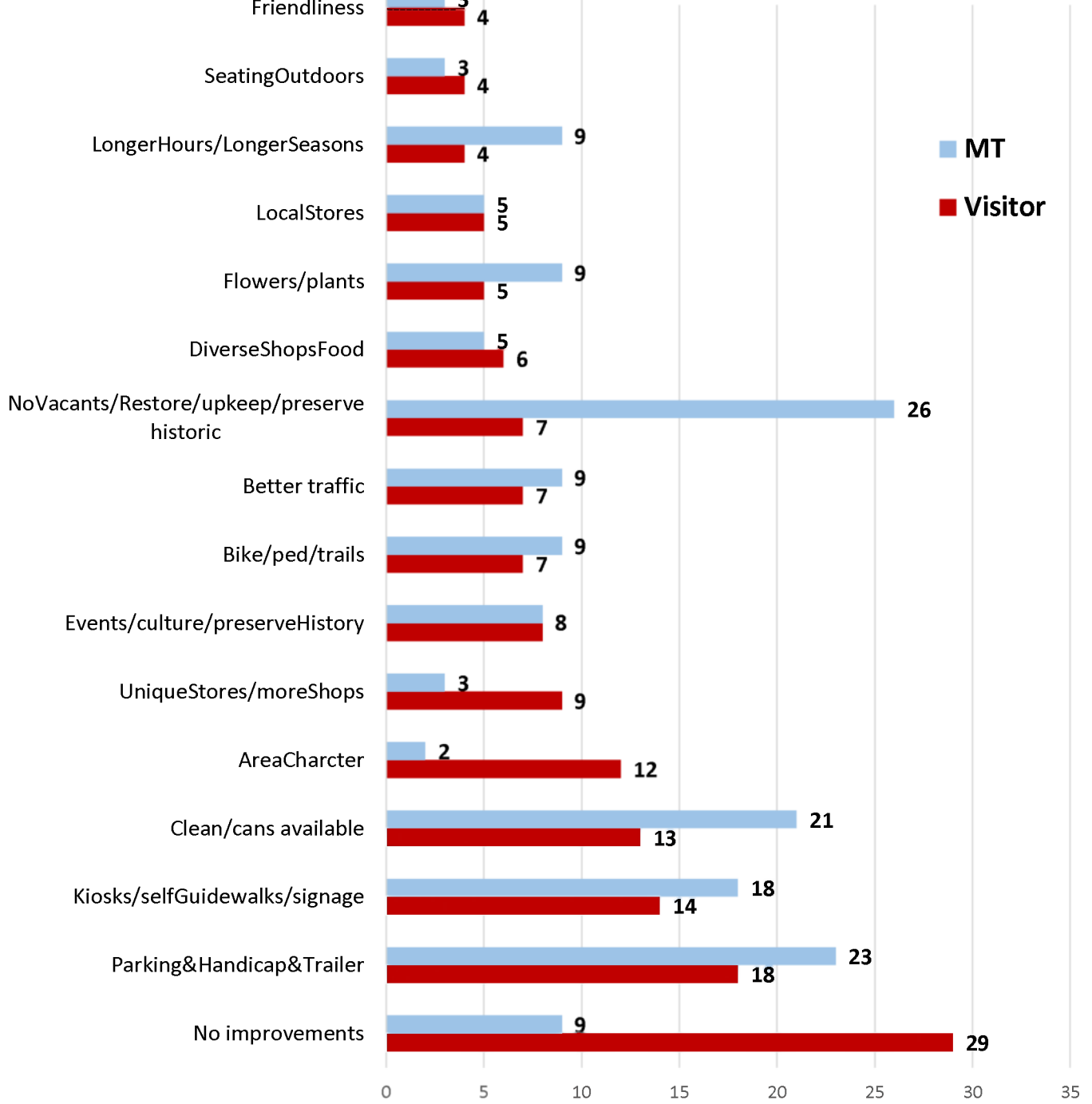
*Scale: 1=Not at all important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Important; 4=Very important

Reasons for staying away from downtown areas*



*Scale: 1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Many times; 5=Almost always

What should be improved with Montana downtown areas: Comparison of open-ended responses provided by Montanans and visitors.



Responses to the question: Think about your favorite downtown (anywhere) and describe why you like that downtown. What are the characteristics of that downtown that make you want to go back?

We like downtowns that are clean, vibrant, and safe. We like to find many different shops or stores that cater to a walking crowd. If there is an historical district included, so much the better.

A collection of shops, galleries, and restaurants. Independently owned (non-chain) shops offering many different items, galleries offering locally made crafts, restaurants with outdoor seating offering local and creative menus. Red Lodge, Montana is a good example.

A downtown with unique locally owned shops. Restaurants serving food items found in that area and brew pubs selling craft beers. NO CHAIN STORES.

A small town feel regardless of the actual size of the city. History and architecture. A good variety of shops and restaurants with a variety of budgets in mind (I hate going into a cool and funky downtown and finding that I can't afford at single thing in any store!). Greenery and not a feeling of 'concrete jungle'

a variety of shops and service (eateries) from fanciful to practical with prices ranging from very affordable (thinking souvenirs, candy shops) to do I want to make this a memorable vacation memory purchase

A wide variety of locally owned establishments (shopping, restaurants/bars, etc.); cleanliness; attractive setting; downtown feel but not too large or overcrowded.

Ability to walk and browse, shops, restaurants.

Active Public space, cultural institutions, retail

Active, lots to see and do, interesting shops and restaurants, easy access to the area, seems warm and friendly (maybe because it looks well cared for and maintained)

Active, traffic not too bad, safe.

Adequate parking for large rigs, 5th wheels etc. NO SPEED TRAPS. Character, charm, something interesting and unique, more than fast food or Walmart. Dog friendly. Places to walk and sit. FRIENDLY PEOPLE.

All downtowns are attractive to me because of all the variety of small local shops, as well as food courts.

All the shops that are people friendly and close by so you can walk to each of them.

Ample easy parking within walking distance of shops that are also within walking distance. This distance can be miles, but the first shops should be close to parking. There should also be ample seating all around so that I can be encouraged to walk as much as I want and rest when--and if--I need. Since I travel with older family members sometimes, if they can't rest, I can't go!

Anaconda is my favorite downtown. It is rich in history that is uniquely Montana. Next I like Butte

ANY TOWN vibrant
shopped Old

Architectural unique and enjoyable.

Smaller, older businesses, historical significance.

Architecture with character; walkable and convenient restaurants, cafes and bars; centralized activities and attractions.

Art galleries, craft beer and burger joints, photo shops

Asheville, NC lots of restaurants to choose from

Atmosphere and activities. Nice restaurants and Bars. Nice people and good shopping.

Attitude, Alpine feel, Bank promotions,

Austin Texas. I like it because there is a wide variety of restaurants and coffee houses. Also a wide variety of entertainment, shopping, art galleries and so forth. I work a few blocks from the area and often take a walk there for exercise at lunch time.

authentic, walkable, warm

Authentic, quaint feeling. Locally owned shops; variety of merchandise. Walking areas, shopping and dining options. Feel that the community takes pride in their downtown

Banff, Alberta, Canada: it's built for tourists and is in a beautiful setting. Whether passing through or staying at their campground or hotel/motel, they are built right.

Beautiful architecture, interesting shopping, fabulous restaurants. cleanliness

Bellevue, Washington. It is very clean and not cluttered. Very nice and well-kept parks close to downtown.

Boise, Idaho

Boston Ma. Great walking, sightseeing easy, many eating places. The residents are friendly and helpful. Safe feeling. Over all favorite city is Venice, Italy. There is no other city in the world to compare. (In my opinion.)

Boston. The Freedom Trail.

Bozeman for the shops

St. Louis I like the remodeling of the landing the river. The shops, the buildings, the atmosphere. all downtown areas have something that make them special

Bozeman has a very nice downtown, interesting stores, great restaurants and fun activities like Music on Main Street

Bozeman is fun to walk and window shop. Omaha has interesting architecture. Edmonton had lots of street theater and food stands

Bozeman is the best. You can walk along and shop, drink coffee, eat lunch. It's relaxed and welcoming. The shops have nice people who actually seem happy to see you.

Bozeman Its small yet it offers everything

Bozeman, I can eat, shop or have a beer and only park one time;

Bozeman, Montana

Bozeman, MT

Bozeman, MT. Has a vibrant feel like no other place I've been. People really want to be there, both living there and who have traveled there.

Bozeman, people, shopping, bars and restaurants, outdoor patios, great food.

Bozeman

Buffalo, N.Y. I like the waterfront mixing with the city. They are trying to make a comeback by building up the waterfront. The restaurants and small boutiques are wonderful. It's not a huge city, but it has heart.

Can't think of any City I have recently visited where the downtown is vibrant and attractive. As in most cases - outer shopping malls have taken over. My biggest issue with downtown in parking meters. Next is aging buildings that have become outdated.

Casselberry FL it is quite, well kept, people friendly. Noxon, MT , small ,everyone knows everyone, down home attitude and parents and children still 'grow-up' together

character

character, family friendly, safe

Characteristics of downtown that I love and make me want to go back are quieter streets with motorcycle parking, but otherwise not crazy traffic. Neat stores that have the original building structures restored. Also historic information throughout the area about what happened there or interesting facts. And most of all, green grass and plants.

Charleston, ambience, good restaurants, interesting shops, walkable.

In Montana, Missoula for basically the same reasons.

Chicago

Chicago! Big tall buildings. History of the city and the Chicago river with the draw bridges. Very cool! Great shopping and Chicago food too!

Chicago, lakefront anywhere! grant park especially, lake Michigan v the city scape amazing

Chicago, vast, historical, hip.

Clean & sweep, summer time flower pots, long timers on the crossing walks to get the elderly across without running clean and spacious

Clean streets, Friendly - welcoming. Open stores. Parking within walking distance.

Clean! Small shops and boutiques, charming atmosphere, hanging flower baskets. No bars. Good restaurants

Clean, attractive, shops and stores for basic needs to unique items. Good restaurants and coffee.

Clean, organized lay out, good store lineup

Clean, wide sidewalks, flowers, attractive store fronts,

Cody, Wyo The downtown maintains the small town feel

Coffee shops, book stores, benches, accessible parking, green space, trees.

Convenient and ease to access. business parking is free.

cost

cultural events, good shopping

culture such as art and theater

diverse cuisines and little fast food

Cut Bank. I love the small town and everything about it.

Cute shops, local flavor, lots of food and restaurants, outdoor seating, cobblestones or other character or charm. Hipster scene

Cute, quaint, local, lots of food, outdoor dining, walkable, lively, public art, clean, safe, historic

Deadwood Sd. It's the old Wild West, shopping and hotels that I like.

Denver, CO, it has some of the best restaurants and shopping anywhere.

Dickson Street and Fayetteville Square in Fayetteville, Arkansas is my favorite place because I like the atmosphere and the diversity of both places. The Fayetteville Square has a Farmer's Market every Saturday and the diversity is so unique and anything you could possibly want to buy is there from free range eggs to home grown honey. Dickson St. is the street where everything happens and the environment is so fun. It has from the Walton Arts Center where you can go and watch all kinds of acts, musicals and magic from Bikes, Blues & Bar-B-cue. The diversity on this street is just wonderful and ever changing with events that are happening throughout the year.

Dillon< Montana

The downtown area is compact, convenient, with historical and modern characteristics. Small but memorable

Distinctive and unique shops. Goods created by local artisans. Good selection of restaurants. Ample, free parking. Public restroom.

Downtown areas that are in touch with its local unique heritage; pedestrian friendly/ bike share programs, bike lanes, street cars, rickshaws, walking trails into downtown; parks or public square space with native plants & trees; local & independent retailers reflecting community sustainability; free entertainment options (music & theater); permanent public markets; balance of cocktail bars with dive bars; proximity to waterfront

Downtown areas usually have unique restaurants and stores that are not low quality chains and are commonly locally-owned by families and not owned corporations.

downtown Auckland was a happening place not sure now

Downtown DC has the National Mall which has a collection of major museums that are free of admission and a beautiful Tidal Basin, especially during cherry blossom period.

Downtown Disney is awesome because it has lots of nice landscaping and walkways. I like the stores as well and shopping is a major part of any downtown experience.

Downtown in Clovis Ca---bars, restaurants, antique shops and a small town feel. They call it the gateway to Yosemite. Farmers Market every Friday

Downtown Salt Lake City has beautiful old architecture, and the buildings are still in impeccable condition. It also has a good mix of newer buildings that complement the old. The city has plenty of places to go within walking distance, and the public transportation is easy to use and efficient.

Downtown Seattle --- all the interesting stores for shopping, even the coffee shops and restaurants. Underground Seattle and Fisherman's Market was great!

Downtown Shelby, Classic, Friendly atmosphere.

Downtown Woodbridge, NJ. The feeling that you can walk around and find anything you need in a few block radius. The smells of engines from the vehicles constantly traveling around. The knowledge that if you want to walk around the beach, it's only a short drive away.

Ease do access. Attractiveness and variety of shopping and recreation opportunity

Easily accessible, ample free parking, safe, lots of options for shopping and eating

Easy access from major Interstate. Cheap parking in a safe area. I travel alone so I have to navigate and drive. If it's confusing or complicated then I don't go down town.

Easy access, free parking and tidy appearance.

Easy parking is essential. Variety of local businesses and interesting stores. A business community of non-retail to enhance traffic and year around patrons.

Easy parking, restaurants, bookstores, shopping, easy to cross streets

Easy pedestrian ways- local offerings- shops, restaurants, music, waterfronts, nice sitting areas (benches etc.)

Easy to get around (good walkways and free public transportation), variation in architecture and skyline, clean with public art.

Easy to get around. Good selection of restaurants. Historical buildings.

Easy to get through and access services

Easy to walk. Full of cultural, historical and scientific museums.

easy walkability, feeling of safety, shops, eateries and reflection of where we are, local history etc.,

easy walking, architecture, good parking, variety of interesting shops

easy walking, wide sidewalks

Energy, historic, night life

Ennis - simple, interesting, easy to manage

Eureka Springs, AR

It has cool architecture, things to do, cool restaurants, relaxing romantic atmosphere

Everything is centrally located; hotels, restaurants, points of interest.

Fort Benton-Love the old buildings and shops. People there are always friendly and welcoming. The old building have great character and charm. Just an all-around nice place to be.

Fort Collins CO has one of the best downtowns because of the walking triangle with no traffic and it's been tastefully updated. In MT, Helena's is pretty cool because of the history and it's nice to walk around in. I like any downtown with nice landscaping, greenery, and one's that are clean.

Frankfurt. Germany.

It's green and cozy place with parks and fountains. It's close to city center and it's nice to have a rest on a bench there.

Friendly people, great restaurants and bars

Friendly, clean, safe, variety of shopping and dining options, prefer historic areas

Friendly, home, everything I need is there.

Friendly, welcoming mannerism of the people. Interests such as local produce and products, excellent yarn, art, and metaphysical shops.

Fun, cool shops and little restaurants tucked in between. Lots of artwork and flowers in the summer. A couple of bars or pubs to whet your whistle!

Good food and barrooms

Good food! quaint shops

Good places to eat, public transportation, parks, good walking areas away from traffic, clean, cute shops, shaded areas

Good restaurants

Good restaurants and shopping within walking distance.

Good restaurants, music entertainment ...

Good shops and friendly people.

GOOD SLECTION OF BARS.....AND PLACES TO EAT AFTER.

Good walkability

Good walking. Parks, even small ones. Civic attention (with good design) to things like light poles, trash cans, benches, and signage. Small shops, the opposite of big box stores. Library.

Great Falls neat historical buildings but also like most locations for same reasons

Great Falls, there is a lot of untouched history such as the Big Band era etc. I love the older buildings. There is a lot of things that need improvement but overall with the True history it is pretty amazing and continues on to Fort Benton. I think the influence of the Military base it offers a pretty good variety of shops and gift stores.

Greeley Colorado

Park your car and walk around to the businesses.

Helena nice place

Helena Historical reverences

Helena Mt. downtown gulch area as it just gives off such an inviting feeling and mood!

Helena, MT has a fabulous downtown, especially their walking mall. No traffic to compete with, great store fronts, nice landscaping (not entirely a concrete jungle)

Helena. There is interesting history. It is an easy downtown to walk to several museums, visit a brewery, and enjoy good food.

Heterogeneous architecture, pedestrian-friendly streets, unique commercial establishments

Historic Architecture and authentic character are most important. Restaurants/Breweries/Bars. Bike Paths/Pedestrian Zones.

Historic, the architecture, great for walking, wandering, picture taking. Great food and bars.

historic, unique or significant architecture, live theatre and music, art museum, walkability, restaurants, busy

Historical architecture, small unique shops, enough close parking,

Historical buildings and businesses.

Historical buildings and neat shops.

Historical buildings, good restaurants, museums, and entertainment venues.

Historical buildings, museums, great outdoor events

Historical buildings, useful goods and services.

Historical buildings. More diverse selection-not just stuff you would find at Walmart. Items from local vendors.

Historical city, wide boulevards, beautiful architecture, good public transportation, museums, lots of cultural events.

Historical, charming. Good food options and original places to shop. Small and quaint, but still enough options...

Hometown nice people everyone polite to everyone stopping in

Huge cities do not interest us. We like Gardner, MT since it is small, people are friendly, you can go walking... just a comfortable place to be, which is nothing like where we live (suburb of Chicago).

I appreciate clean and unique shops. I also appreciate local restaurants. It is great when a local coffee roaster, brewery, etc. is located in a downtown area. Downtown areas that are dirty and/or filled with loiterers make the experience unpleasant.

I appreciate the visitor centers and the maps and coupons and information they provide.

I DON'T GO DOWN TOWN ANYMORE THEN I HAVE TOO

HELL, I DON'T GO TO TOWN ANYMORE THEN I HAVE TO

I don't visit a lot of downtown areas, but probably Missoula Montana. It is easy to walk around and still has a lot of the older buildings. It also along the river so it is very eye appealing.

I enjoy looking at the building architecture.

I enjoy seeing the historic buildings original and new buildings which have been designed to look like the old architecture styles. Pedestrian friendly. Availability of public restrooms/drinking fountains.

I enjoy the historical areas that have been kept historic, both in how they appear and how they function.

I generally avoid downtowns having a love for the wilderness. I like downtown Montreal for its decent transportation system & lively & friendly vibe. I like Sheridan WY & Bozeman MT for their lively main streets. Street life, accessibility, affordable refreshments, variety of non-chain store shopping.

I happen to love Montana History, so the original 'down town' of any town is appealing for the historic nature alone. The old architect, the way the old buildings are set up inside, is one attraction. I also like the individuality of down town business. It seems there are no two alike, but if they sell similar product, they are unique enough to justify their

existence.

I have never been to Montana in the downtown area. I would like to go though.

I like a business district that has a hometown feel where the community's past is reflected by the look of the buildings.

I like a mix of shops (to include touristy, niche, antique, galleries, candy, a jeweler) eateries (local - not commercial) museums, local hotels and B&B's. (Estes Park, CO.)

I like downtown Atlanta, GA as there is something for everyone. The children can splash in the water park area. Families can listen to free music during the summer. No matter the time of day free activities can be had by all.

I like downtown Missoula and downtown Great Falls. I enjoy specialty shops for board games, video games, and artwork. I also like restaurants that are not the same old franchises that I can get anywhere else. I like being able to walk around and feel safe.

I like downtowns that have some historic significance which are both fun and safe to explore (such as Helena, MT). I do not like dead and uninteresting downtowns which are not safe to explore.

I like downtowns that seem to transport me back to a less stressful time. Old brick buildings, angle parking, historic districts, etc.

I like downtowns with lots of historical elements.

I like historic downtown areas, like in Butte and Helena.

I like little unique shops with a variety of things offered such as gifts, souvenirs, clothing, specialty shops, and dining and beverage options. An atmosphere that is inviting with shrubs and tree is always nice, but not always possible depending on the town.

I like that downtown because it is peaceful and safe, with friendly and nice people. The life there is calm and quiet. There are beautiful, colorful and clean houses. The streets are clean and full of flowers. Citizens ride bicycles and drive cars very carefully.

I like the charm of an old downtown filled with unique stores. I like to see historical places and museums. I love concerts in the park and arts and crafts shows, and community activities

I like the historical factor and the shopping

I like the old down town section of Missoula. I like the restaurants, the old market, etc. The old bars. I also enjoy downtown Butte.

I like the older buildings and that they are right on the side walk with the parking lots in the back off the main street.

I like to go into little shops that have inexpensive vintage items whether it is kitchen utensils or things I can use for decor. I especially like to find shops that offer local artisan works. Ocracoke Island, NC is full of shops like this and I love to go there. They offer beautiful sun catchers, items from the sea, and gardening articles. In Darby, MT there is a long shop downtown that has a great variety of old and new things to decorate with. I spent a lot of money in that place! I like to buy t-shirts of the area. Candle shops are always nice. Local cultural foods what people want to experience when they are on vacation. Like buffalo stew and Indian fry bread. I want to eat at small hole in the wall places that serve what is best food for that area. No one wants to eat at a chain restaurant you can visit everywhere USA. In Suttons Bay, MI they have the neatest downtown area that makes you feel so welcome. You can spend the whole day there wandering around. Many local craftsmen sell their wares and you can take a walk on the beach. They sell the fossils, petoskey stones, that can only be found on Lake Michigan. Galena, IL has renovated their entire historic downtown area and it is very beautiful with quaint little coffee shops with pastries. It was General Grants hometown.

I like when it feels like a historic neighborhood - people live and work and shop and recreate there. Lots of historic downtowns are only visited by tourists and can feel lifeless.

I love downtown Missoula because of the vibe that seems to be there. always something going on...very welcoming

I love my hometown downtown of Orlando, FL. The downtown area has an active nightlife, but also has a gorgeous lake with a walking path, surrounded by historical houses. It's a nice mix of new and old!

I love the historic 'walled cities' of Europe as well as Quebec City Canada. Within the walls I enjoy walking without worrying about vehicles.

I love the historical part of the city, it's where everyone comes to shop and visit. Look at the architecture of the building. I know I try to think about what went on way back when and that is what keeps me going back. I see something different each time.

I love the small town quaint feeling and the amount of family-related activities available.

I love the uniqueness of the various businesses/restaurants/shops.

I moved to Montana 12 years ago to get away from urban areas. I only go 'downtown', to Missoula or Kalispell to shop.

I really liked Bozeman. It is clean, wide, active, and modern with a bit of old at the same time. I also like the downtown's in Maine that are on the coast: Boothbay, etc. They are very quaint and nautical.

I think I would have to say Portland, OR. It is made to be friendly, there are restaurants there you can't find most places, unique shops.

I think immediately of a combination of open, public (non-revenue-producing) land such as a plaza or town square. Commercial attractions (restaurants and so forth) wouldn't be too far away. In the case of a plaza, they'd be on the perimeter.

I visit downtown areas for the history and the convenience.

I would have to say downtown Missoula. Only because that's really the only downtown I've been. I like it because everyone is their own, it's peaceful, and there always seems to be something going on.

I would like to talk about downtown Montreal: what I like is to walk on streets with people, to look at the stores and to visit museums,,

Idaho Springs, Colorado. I like Denver's down town area because of all the history that has been preserved. In Idaho Springs you get a sense of how it was back many years ago. You can almost see the past as you walk down the sidewalks.

In general I don't like cities so this a hard question for me. I do like downtown Helena where you can walk without car traffic and there are tree and shops.

In Whitefish, Montana: a few nice restaurants, coffee shop, playground, WALKABLE area.

Interesting shops, good places to eat and drink, something for everyone. Close parking

Intimate...pedestrian.....old

inviting atmosphere, buildings in good repair, clean, trees and flowers

Inviting business storefronts -

Istanbul

there is an old part of city with mosques and it's also close to the sea. There are lots of open cafes with shisha and coffee and souvenir shops. It's a real pleasure to begin walk from the beach, then move to some museum and after that enjoy the local meal.

It feels friendly. Interesting shops to visit. Historical sites to see. Comfortable and friendly. Parking available.

It has historic buildings that are either preserved or rehabilitated, it has many shops to visit, a variety of eateries, displays or buildings dedicated to telling the story of the area. Hustle/bustle that says thriving.

It has shade, interesting architecture, a variety of sales options and places to eat. The people are helpful and friendly.

It is friendly and has lots of small stores. These stores are not the big box type but small specialty stores.

It is more appealing if all or most of the stores are currently occupied and kept in good condition. They may be old buildings but they have modern lighting and furnishings.

It is the feel of the historical sites and the old well cared for buildings. Helena was one of our favorites.

It is walkable and doesn't have panhandling.

It must have high quality specialty stores and art galleries. The goods must be unique. The street must take me back 100 years to the high period of downtown Mercantile.

It's a tie between Bigfork and Whitefish. I love all the touristic shops, cafes and bars. The people are always friendly and helpful.

It's clean and feels safe to walk around, day or night. There is a variety of things to do, see, and shop for. People are friendly and inviting and you feel like you are welcomed there.

It's pedestrian friendly. Most of the shops and restaurants are locally owned and unique. The downtown area is not just for tourists; local people are present also.

Jackson Hole, WY -- It has great shops and eateries that are all within walking distance.

Kalispell Neat town, clean, lots of history, cool summers

Kalispell - This area invites foot traffic and holds many of the attractions people seek when visiting. The commercial properties there are varied and accepting of new peoples and values.

Kalispell is a beautiful town. Like shopping there.

Kalispell, enjoy seeing, researching, and exploring old buildings, parks, and museums.

Larger number of dining, lodging, entertainment options. Much easier to make everyone happy.

Las Vegas, New Mexico

Leavenworth Washington such a picturesque beautiful city u feel like u r in Switzerland

Lewistown, Helena, and small town main streets. Downtown areas seem to have a personality, a uniqueness.

Lively energy. Scenic...festivals and activities despite rain or snowy conditions.

Livingston and Bozeman. They have vibrant downtowns (not yet vacated by shopping malls). You can park your car and then walk.

Lots of different features, shops, restaurants and attractions. Good public transportation

lots of interesting shops, easy walking

Lots of little locally owned businesses and activities that draw in people such as music or festivals.

Lots of local businesses with good hours (later than 5), buildings preserved instead of knocked over for paid lots, good mixture of coffee shops/bars, and good eating.

Lots of parking, easy to navigate around, stores/restaurants that I like. Clean atmosphere.

Lots of privately owned businesses. Coffee Houses, Bars, Interesting shops.

Lots of street level activity, easy walking access; scenic.

Lots of used book stores, small art galleries, interesting architecture, cozy restaurants and, most importantly, adequate, low-cost parking.

Manhattan

Vibrant food scene, walkable, history, central park, architecture (old and new)

-Many things to do

-Safe

-Good transportation

-Clean

-Well-lit

-Non-congested

Maynooth, Ireland. quiet, scenic and friendly

Me and my wife love downtown Missoula the atmosphere the people are amazing. We are from Chicago but there is no awkward feeling when we go visit the down town area everybody is warm and inviting. The festivals and attractions in downtown Missoula are amazing. Not to mention that the downtown is spotless with no trash anywhere to be found.

Missoula - a variety of businesses & activities, good parking is available and you feel safe when you are in the downtown area.

Missoula has the most attractive area in and around the downtown area, the river and all the activities make it a great place to be.

Missoula, It has a clean and vibrant feel, things are happening, access to so many different types of business by foot.

Missoula, it's just a modern day town in an old Western atmosphere. A blend of an all in one culture.

Missoula, Montana love the Saturday Framers market, its location, the atmosphere, the friendliness, the entertainment, everything

Missoula, Mt. Lunch in the Park, the Carousel, the river!

Missoula, MT. The downtown area has, mostly, original buildings an eclectic variety of business' and restaurants and a

feeling of vibrancy.

Missoula, MT: the historic buildings, the river park and walkways, the summer markets, concerts, shopping in the smaller local shops. Proximity to the university.

Missoula, unique and lots of little shops with local influence

Missoula.....like the fact that they have some well-known shopping places

Missoula: Diverse, engaging, small business entrepreneurs, music, food, environment

Mix of traffic- pedestrian, bicyclists, auto. Clean air. Creek and numerous trees. Mix of shops with basic services- bank, groceries, specialty retail, and coffee. Public art and public spaces, seating, shade.

Montana

My downtown is the historic Charleston, South Carolina. I love all the old buildings.

My favorite aspect of a good downtown area is a social vibe, a feeling well-cultivated by lots of public seating areas. This encourages people to enjoy each other's company, street artists to play music and sell crafts, and other socially oriented activities.

My favorite downtown area has clean sidewalks, several cafes with pretty outdoor sitting areas, trees and flowers planted frequently along the sidewalks, and different types of places; i.e. cafes, restaurants, bars, shops, comedy club, ice cream parlor, etc.

My favorite downtown area is Old Ellicott City, Md. It is just a few miles from my home, which is nice. It is a quaint old city, with roots back to the mid 1700's. The town has changed very little over these years. It is romantic, has tons of great, small boutiques, and decent restaurants and bars. The river runs directly under the buildings, and offers fishing, tubing, and kayaking. The surrounding area is just as breath-taking.

My favorite downtown has always been Red Lodge. I love seeing the signs of Bogarts, the Red Lodge Cafe and the movie theatre. They are timeless and welcoming. Downtown Red Lodge is quaint and I like that cars stop for pedestrians. I also like that there are no stop lights.

My favorite downtown is filled with shops and restaurants that you can park and walk along. It also has a great farmers market during the summer. it closes down blocks of town on Saturday morning for the market.

It is a small town with a small town feel. Just lots of things to do while you are walking around downtown.

My favorite downtown is my local town, Hatboro, PA. I like it because it's small, but has a wide variety of unique shops you can't find anywhere else - Hatboro Bakery, DeLuca Music, La Fontana restaurant - plus, every Friday in the summer they have a farmer's market and a funky little street fair. A genuine old small town.

My favorite downtown would be a place with free and adequate parking. Lots of things to do in close proximity and a farmer's market type atmosphere.

neatness, friendliness, security, pollution free

never go down town

New York city is my favorite due to its diverse forms of activity.

New York City is so alive. Best vacation I have ever spent in a city. So many things to do and places to eat.

New York city, shows and experience

Newburyport Ma. It has a nice mix of old and new shops, i.e. antiques, and new things also. Great little restaurants, free music concerts and an awesome vintage car show once a year.

Nice mix of art galleries and local craftsmen and local stores providing food, life necessities (hardware, grocery, books) small local restaurants where staff are able to provide service with a personal touch. Local flavor more than chains

Nice mix of shops, restaurants, lodging, open areas.

No clock watching, get up when you want and go to bed when you want.

Not too crowded, interesting shop, nice scenery such as mountains or rivers.

Norfolk, Virginia. A downtown area where you have a huge variety of shops, a mall and apt/condo living above the grocery stores, and theaters. An eclectic area of varied restaurants, coffee baristas. Walking among a variety of interesting shops

Not a huge fan of large Downtowns. I love the small town 4 to 8 block downtowns. Usually they have great shops and great food. My favorite would have to be Estes Park, CO. I love the surrounding scenery and the variety of shops.

not crowded, plenty of room to walk down the street, traffic is light

Not sure I have a clear favorite, but perhaps Plymouth England. I lived there for some time and it was always busy, had some nice shops and places to eat (for England anyway), and the ocean nearby was great.

NYC come on :)

Oh, Chicago - far and away!! The Magnificent Mile, shopping, looking at others who are shopping, FEELING SAFE after the 50 years of the two mayors Daley. I've been in downtown Boston, New York (also midtown and uptown, Washington, Philadelphia-- nothing like Chicago

Oklahoma city, riverwalk, outdoor dining, atmosphere

Old

Old and quaint buildings with shops and restaurants, and other places to visit

Old buildings, green spaces, adequate parking, variety of restaurants and shops

Old city, narrow streets, lots of street level stores, great architecture from several periods, lots of small eateries and pubs - duh I grew up in Boston -- BUT Bozeman MT and Portland ME are my favorite small cities -they have some of the above characteristics

Old nostalgic buildings and businesses.

Old original store fronts. Active open businesses.

Old time feel and look. Interesting shops that are unique.

Old town Helena. Lots of small shops that make it fun to shop.

Old! Old time characteristics of the architecture and small town ambiance. I like quaint friendly areas with lots of preserved history.

old, small, slowski

Oldham England UK. It's only open to pedestrian and has a full outside market.

Open air restaurants and Bars. More pedestrian.

Open and friendly to all types of people: races , ethnicities and sexual/gender identities

open, lots of choices for food and shopping,

Ottawa, Ontario because it has the greatest market place for food and unusual/unique products. Also great eating establishments and it is basically a walk around or cycle around area

Outdoor activities (i.e. fairs, festivals); easy transportation; monuments; museums

Outdoor dining, music, bars, restaurants.

Pearl Street-downtown Boulder Colorado. Walking mall with through streets for traffic, reasonable opportunity for parking, lots of places to sit down, outdoor cafes, eclectic street performers, shade trees, active shops

Pedestrian friendly, cute shop windows, outdoor eating, architecture

Pedestrian friendly, scenic and historic, thriving with people.

Philipsburg Montana, the downtown has a historical feel and there are unique shops and things to do.

Philipsburg, Montana

Philipsburg-quaint, historic, nostalgic, etc.

Phillipsburg MT. The buildings and people. love the candy shop in Phillipsburg,

Philly- love the art work and architecture

Places. To eat outdoors and people watch. Clean with inviting flowers and no panhandlers

Points of interest that are unique; good selection of diverse restaurants, bars, and taverns; reasonably priced places to stay within walking distance.

Portland, OR Nice shopping, walking paths, great river view and things to do!

Portland, Oregon - pedestrian friendly, lots of trees, statues, drinking & decorative fountains, decorative plantings, a variety of restaurants, nice parks, lots of community events, a wide array of shopping including great book stores.

Champaign, IL -- a nice small easy to get around downtown with night clubs & coffee shops, many with outdoor seating, bakeries, a nice tea shop and a growing number and variety of retail outlets. Pedestrian friendly

Probably the town I live in, Helena. Old buildings, ped walkway, some shops, but not really too high end...also not too crowded.

Quaint, historical, clean, local eateries, museums, other activities, friendly people.

Red lodge Montana a beautiful small town at the base of the Beartooth mountains. It's a panoramic view.

Red Lodge, MT ≈ inviting/interesting shops

Red Lodge, MT downtown reminds me of a tourist town in Tennessee and it makes me feel like I am back home.

reflects the history of the city

Respect to historical architecture, cleanliness, visual appeal (flowers, banners, etc.), amount of traffic/pedestrian traffic, appeal of businesses in the area

restaurants and people

restaurants or shopping that match our tastes

Restaurants, interesting people, local shops with local artist art

Restoration, parking, outdoor dining

Revitalization of older areas with a wide variety of new, unique stores and restaurants.

River or water front, family safety

Safe, easy access (public transportation, parking, reasonable traffic), concentrated within a reasonable geography to allow walking or biking, restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, museums, other interesting things to do.

Safe, friendly, fun and easy to find things.

Safe, walkable, good food options, museums, free parking, green space, affordable lodging.

San Antonio Texas. The River Walk is totally awesome. Very nice ambiance, very safe and lots of choices. Friendly people.

Sandpoint Idaho

Interesting shops, parking centers, pedestrian friendly. we always find something we have never seen before.

Savanah Ga, the architecture of the buildings, shops, food, transportation

Scenery and relaxing environment.

Scobey

Seattle - because they have a market that is interesting to visit.

Shopping, food and fun things to do

shopping, historical buildings, restaurants, lake front

shopping, restaurants and historical places

Shops, restaurants, busy, social, scenic.

Sights smells sounds. people watching

Singapore. Love the original city centre because it retains the flavour of its roots in a fusion of straits Chinese, Malaysian, Sikh heritage and marries it with cutting edge modern architecture, amazing food and great shopping

Size, restaurants, stores, nightlife

Small downtown district with lots of small open shops and a lot of variety.

small one of a kind shops

Small Shops and neat architecture

Small stores, friendly staff

Small town feel, interesting stores, restaurants and architecture

Small town. Unique shops. Independent restaurants.

SMALL WITH some arts and history

Small, compact, not shabby or run-down, a good blend of rather elegant and funky shops, fine dining (both upscale and down-scale), buildings with character and architectural and/or historical significance. It's walkable, pedestrians have the right-of-way, friendly dogs are ever-present, commercial and residential use structures are well-mixed and fully integrated. Shopping is always within walking distance of the residential core. The population is probably less than 4000-5000. I would like to live in this town!

Specialty shops, great food, and great customer service and people.

St. Charles, MO Part of it is pedestrian only, Nice shops and restaurants, historical significance, clean with nice landscaping and places to sit and relax. Good parking.

Streets with flowers and wide sidewalks. Crosswalk signals to cross traffic safely. Interesting stores with more than just tourist stuff

The action = Free music and other entertainment.

The architecture of the buildings. The city has maintained the history of the city and continues to use these buildings.

The atmosphere, different stores close together. A variety of restaurants.

The best restaurants, the locally owned shops, nice architecture, easy parking.

The businesses on the most central part of town are convenient for parking

The downtown area I like has multiple things to do - museums, concerts, and interesting buildings. There are also multiple restaurants serving different types of food. The people are friendly and helpful.

The good variety of stores & restaurants, plus the opportunity to people watch.

The historic nature of the area and a good diversity in shops and eateries.

The history of downtown areas is a big draw. I also like the architecture of the downtown area, and the activity. Downtown areas are usually vibrant with activity. In smaller towns the area usually offers a feeling of historical quaintness.

The local owner's knowledge.

THE OLD HISTORIC BUILDINGS THE WELL KEPT AREAS AROUND THE DOWNTOWN AREA THE GREAT PLACES TO EAT AND SHOP AS WELL AS THE HISTOTY OF THE AREA

The scenery, the food and restaurants are amazing, the people, just the beauty of it all.

There are lots of interesting things to see and do there. The businesses like their customers and tell them hi and thank you... Little things like that.

There are many things to visit within walking distance. Also, there are many museums and parks which can be visited. Lastly, I love the cultural venues (symphony halls, opera theaters, etc.) where many exceptional productions are offered.

There is a public square and small locally owned stores and restaurants.

Things to see, restaurants, vibrant, people watching, safe, outdoor cafes,

This is hard because I have 2 favorite types of 'downtown': 1) Bigger City (i.e., Portland) and 2) Small Quaint Downtown. Both, however, have a very walkable feel to them and a variety of *local* shops (coffee, food, clothes, art, home goods, etc.). The areas also still have intact a lot of their original architecture and respect the natural beauty of the surrounding area.

Tree lined streets, flowers blooming in pots. No trash. Businesses are open and flourishing. Friendly people.

Trees, interesting use of sidewalks (art, cafes. etc.,) cultural resources, good pedestrian access, walking malls.

Try to stay away from downtowns

Unique shops and restaurants that are not 'chains' and speak to the uniqueness and individuality of the own that I am visiting. A place where I can try food that I can't get at home, regional specialties or pick up a unique gift or memento of my trip

Unique shops and restaurants which are locally owned. A historic building, such as a court house, or a restoration of a building such as a mill or part of a manufacturing site.

Unique shops, walkable, landscape (flowers trees) benches, artwork.

Unique stores and old fashion looks with modern updates.

Unique to other parts of the country. Still has historical charm

Uniqueness, interesting vendors, accessibility for all, clean and tidy atmosphere, community spirit.

Usually charming old historic feel to them.

Vancouver, BC, Canada. Restaurants, bars, cafes, shopping, culture, lots of green spaces, interesting architecture, easy to access via transit system, clean, busy, etc.

Variety of stores, parking near with shuttle service.

Vibrant, with several dining and entertainment options. Walkable, with ample parking spots.

Virginia city, just fabulous people, bars, scenery.

Virginia City. Old ghost towns, but especially VC because it is a living ghost town. Nowhere can you see buildings like that, items of the era etc. Calming

Visitor friendly, easy parking, well-marked attractions, reasonable prices on food.

Walkability, walkability, walkability. Specifically: there are a range of things to do or see and it feels accessible and safe to explore the area. Every town is different, some have great small parks, some have restaurants, some have architecture, etc. But the common thread between all my favorite cities is that they are easily explored and enjoyed. Cars usually make it difficult to do this - it requires parking, which requires space, which spreads things out, and then becomes a risk to other pedestrians.

Walkability. Unique stores. Outdoor eating

Walkable, clean, safe, lots of green spaces.

Walkable, interesting shops and restaurants, lots of use by locals and visitors

Walkable, interesting stores, restaurants, public art, diversity of uses and people.

Walkable, lots of shops and restaurants, safe.

Walking malls with no traffic. Restaurants, outdoor seating, street music and entertainment. Some shopping but limited tourist shops with junk from China. Art galleries.

Walking trails, food and beverage, affordable parking

Welcoming, clean and safe. Parking is easy. Attractions including museums within 30 minutes walking distance. Also a selection of reasonably priced restaurants and pubs.

Well preserved, historic buildings. A place that is supported by the community. A meeting place for the community.

West Yellowstone

center of many fishing destinations

Whitefish MT- nice mix of businesses, food, bars, unique stores, sitting areas

Salt Lake city-same as above just more of it, and of course the Mormon Temple Lands

Palm Springs Ca-shopping, food, bars, walkability

Whitefish- so much to see, do, shop. Just a fun time.

Whitefish

many shops and parks to visit

Whitefish. I like that there are the 'usual' businesses/restaurants, but also the depot, depot park w/fountain, performing arts center, etc., all right there, and it seems as if downtown is the true gathering place for people to be (other than the lake and ski hill, of course.)

Well kept older buildings with some historical background that are still being used in whatever business matter that is meaningful to the area

With Chicago being the exception, my favorite downtowns are all smaller towns where everything worth going to is located downtown. It is the focal point of the town/city. I don't think it can be created or faked - it has to be the way it is and has been in those towns for it to exist.

Wow, can't pick a favorite one. But what I remember about them is diversity in businesses and the people. Easy access, stores that the average Joe could shop at but also cultural and local art flavor mixed with it. Open courtyards. Availability of food and restrooms.
