Downtown Grand Rapids 2023: Year in Review



Downtown at a Glance *in 2023*

STOREFRONT BUSINESSES

18 storefront businesses opened in 2023
105 storefront businesses opened since pandemic*
302 storefront businesses in Downtown
20% average vacancy

HOTEL

2,466 hotel rooms
57% average occupancy

VISITORS

27.4M visits to Downtown
93% visitor activity compared to pre-pandemic
4.7M visits during World of Winter

MOBILITY

292,632 DASH rides
5.9M Rapid rides (city-wide)
99 walk score
67 transit score
60 bike score

**and still operating in 2023*

HOUSING & RESIDENTS

5,945 average daily resident population
4,897 housing units in Downtown
56 housing units added in 2023
1:3 affordable to market-rate mix

AMBASSADORS

457,100 lbs of trash removed
374,857 pedestrian assists
25 active Ambassadors

JOBS

39% of city-wide jobs are in Downtown (2021)
85% employee activity compared to pre-pandemic

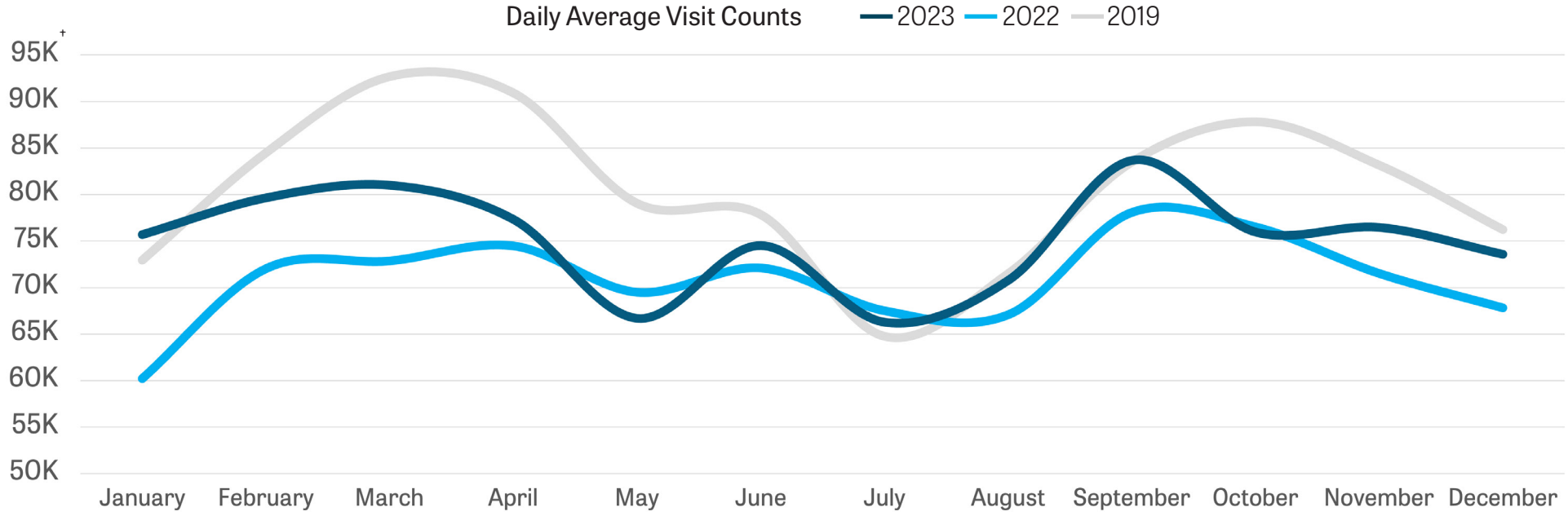
OFFICE

10.4M square feet of office space inventory
8.4% average vacancy

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

29 arts and cultural institutions
235 public events in 2023

Downtown Visitor Activity Tracking



† y-axis truncated to highlight changes

Source: Placer.ai

27.4 million
visits to Downtown in 2023

Visitor Ethnicity[2]	2023	2019
White	71.6%	73.3%
Black	9.5%	9.0%
Hispanic or Latino	11.1%	10.4%
Asian	3.2%	3.1%
Other	4.6%	4.1%

Source: American Community Survey, 2021

Activity Explained

Placer.ai estimates **1.3 million** visit nights - or overnight hotel stays (14% higher than 2022) - leading to an estimated spending potential of **$250 million** in the district (11% higher than 2022).[1] While afternoon activity is the highest (32%), nighttime activity is growing the fastest, with **28%** of visitor activity occuring between 7 PM and 1 AM (26% in 2019; 27% in 2022).

Why It Matters

An increasing daily nighttime population highlights the rise of **Downtown as a draw** for visitors and in particular suggests that the food and beverage industry, as well as the entertainment sector, are the probable drivers behind that growth.

1 This is compiled by Placer.ai. This metric approximates the likely economic impact of visitors, by multiplying the total number of Visit Nights by visitors' Median Daily Disposable Income (according to STI Popstats™ estimate, which is compiled according to the area of origin).
2 Placer.ai estimates are based on the census tracts of the home locations of visitor counts.

Downtown Hotels

Downtown Grand Rapids boasts

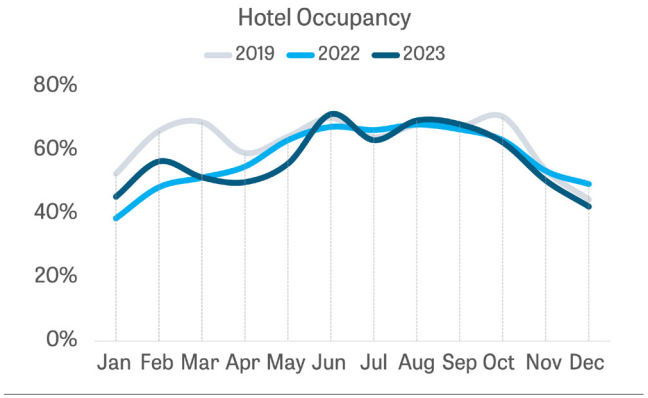
2,466 hotel rooms

in the district and in 2023 saw an average of

57% occupancy rate

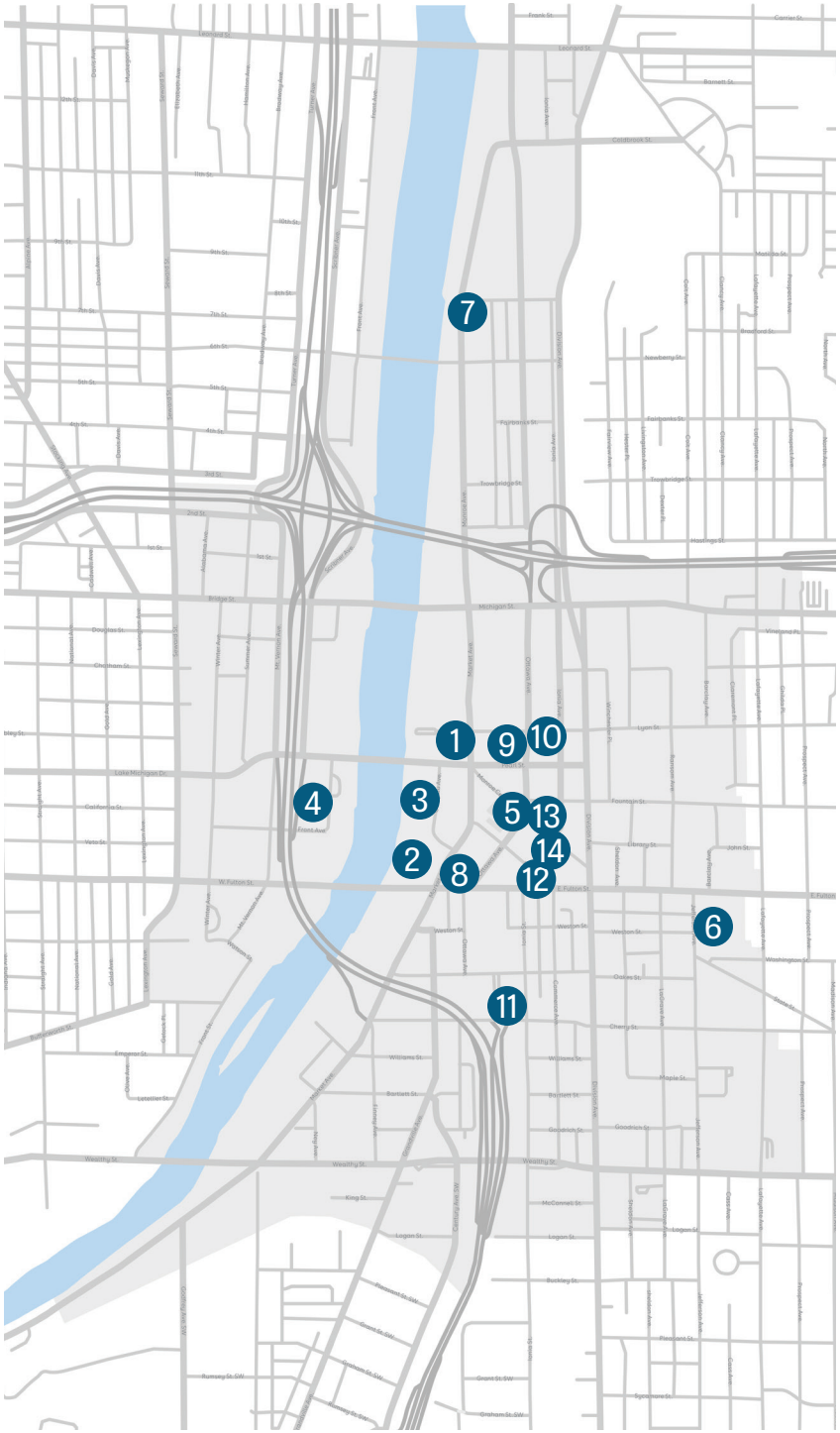
compared to a 58% average in 2022 and a 63% average in 2019[1]. The more than 200 groups and more than 400,000 show attendees to DeVos Place and various hotels were major contributors to these elevated numbers. Large-scale events such as ArtPrize and World of Winter also contributed new and returning visitors, as did the patrons of Downtown Grand Rapids' various cultural institutions, festivals and venues.

1 Source: Smith Travel Research via CoStar



The Big Picture

1,007 of Downtown's 2,466 hotel rooms (41%) opened in the last 5 years across 8 hotels. Downtown hosts 22% of the hotel rooms available in Kent County and accounts for 31% of the county's $265 million in hotel revenue in 2023.



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

1 **Amway Grand Plaza**
682 rooms
opened 1913

2 **Courtyard by Marriott**
214 rooms
opened 1996

3 **JW Marriott**
337 rooms
opened 2007

4 **Holiday Inn Downtown**
175 rooms
opened 2009

5 **CityFlats Hotel**
48 rooms
opened 2011

6 **The Inn on Jefferson**
3 rooms
opened 2015

7 **Embassy Suites by Hilton**
250 rooms
opened 2019

8 **AC Hotel by Marriott**
130 rooms
opened 2019

9 **Homewood Suites by Hilton**
119 rooms
opened 2019

10 **Hyatt Place Downtown**
160 rooms
opened 2019

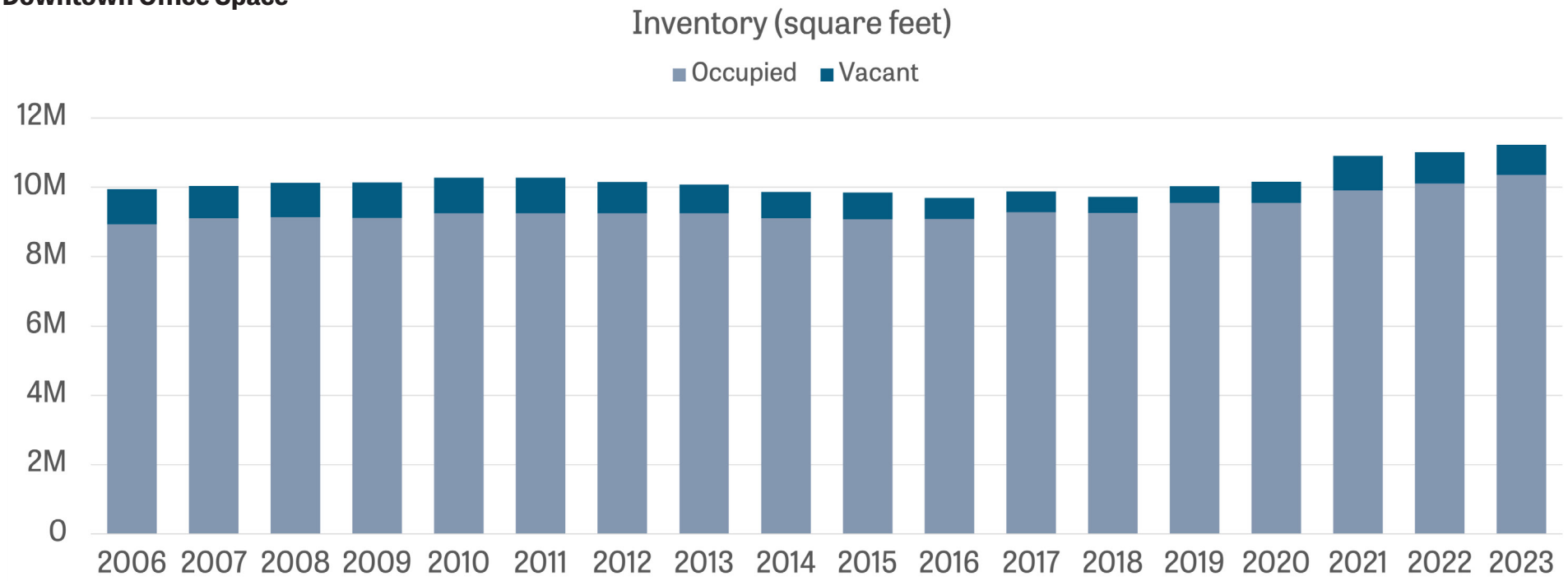
11 **Canopy by Hilton**
164 rooms
opened 2020

12 **Residence Inn by Marriott**
147 rooms
opened 2021

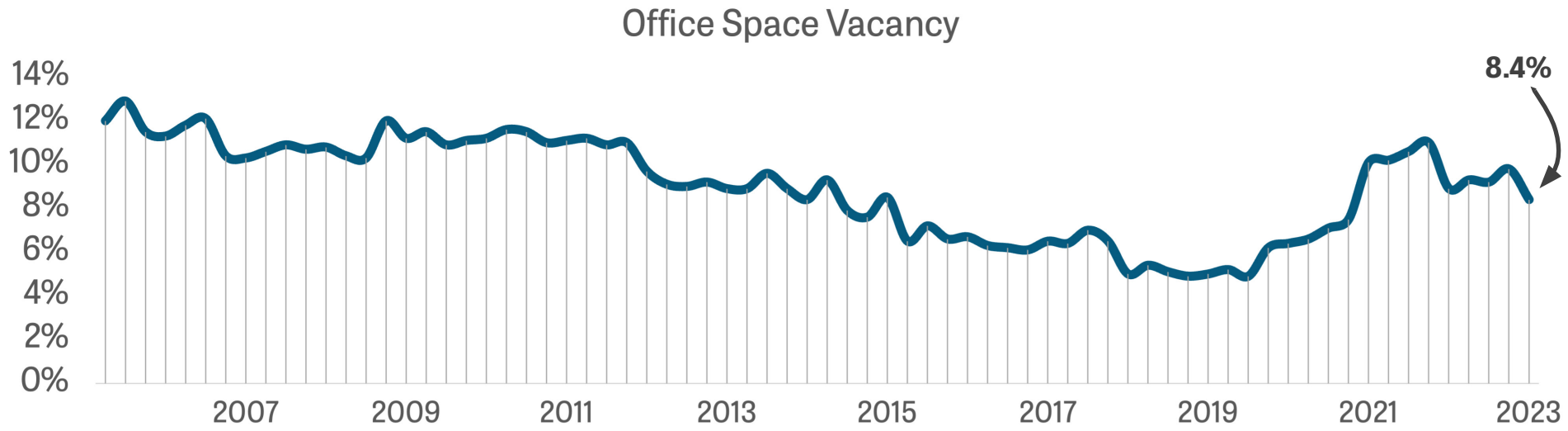
13 **The Morton Hotel**
32 rooms
opened 2021

14 **The Finnley Boutique Hotel**
5 rooms
opened 2021

Downtown Office Space



In 2022, **MSU's Innovation Park** opened, with 200k new square feet of office space along the western edge of the Medical Mile corridor. 2024 will see the opening of Corewell Health's new campus in Monroe North, the **Center For Transformation and Innovation**, which will add 303k square feet of office space to the district, consolidating up to 1,800 employees across 26 buildings.



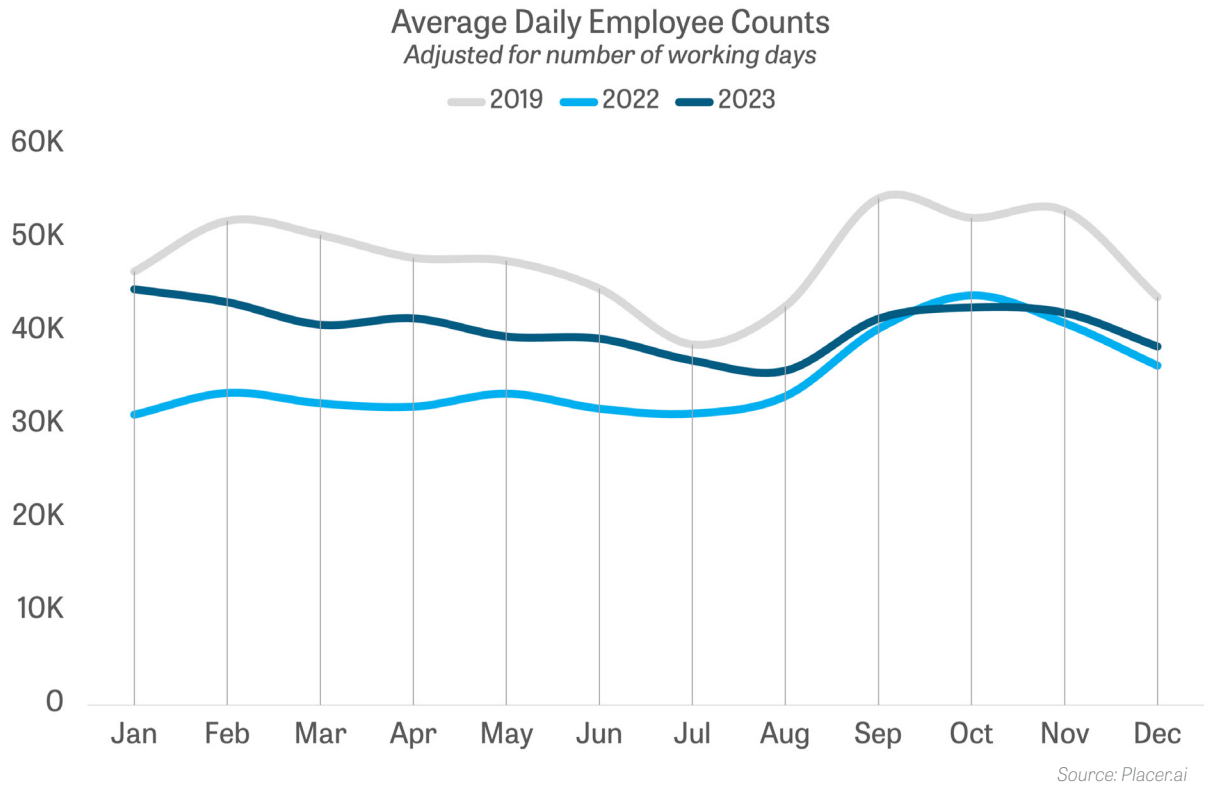
Source: CoStar

Employees

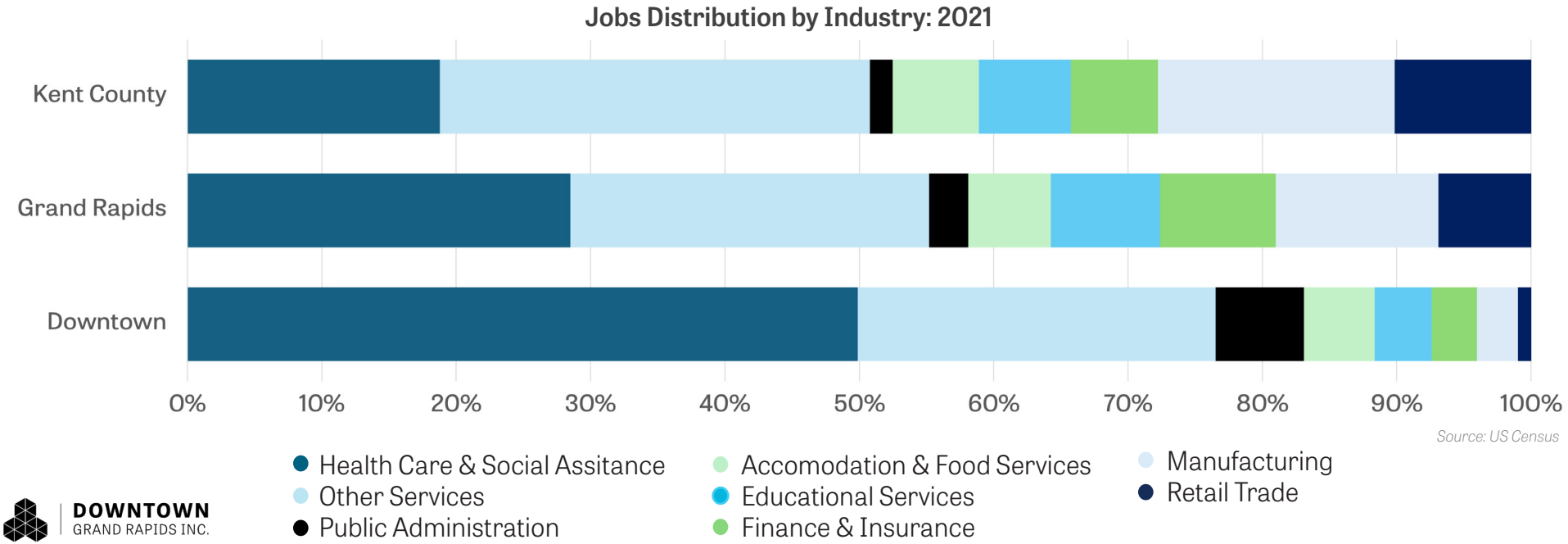
Employee activity continued to grow in 2023, with average daily counts **16% higher** than in 2022, while still **15% lower** than in 2019.

Daily average counts (adjusted for number of working days) suggest that there were **40,411 employees** in Downtown on an average work day (34,923 in 2022; 47,670 in 2019).

As expected, July and August were the slowest months while activity was highest in January and February. This is a shift from the trend of September, October and November typically seeing the highest employee counts.



Source: Placer.ai



Source: US Census

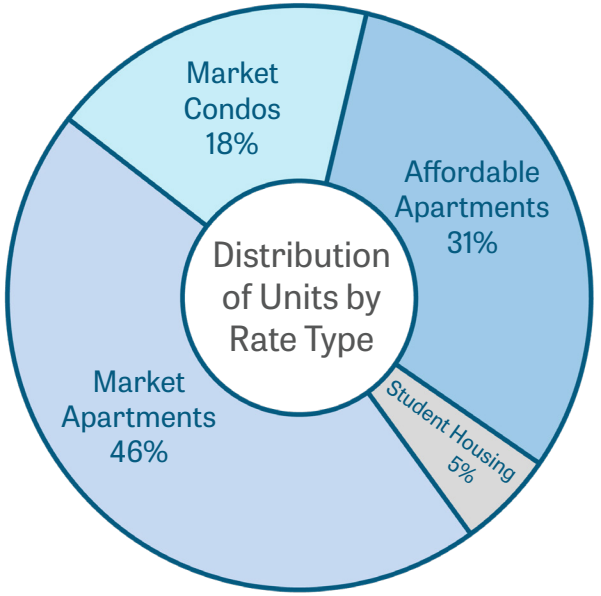
Downtown Housing Supply Overview

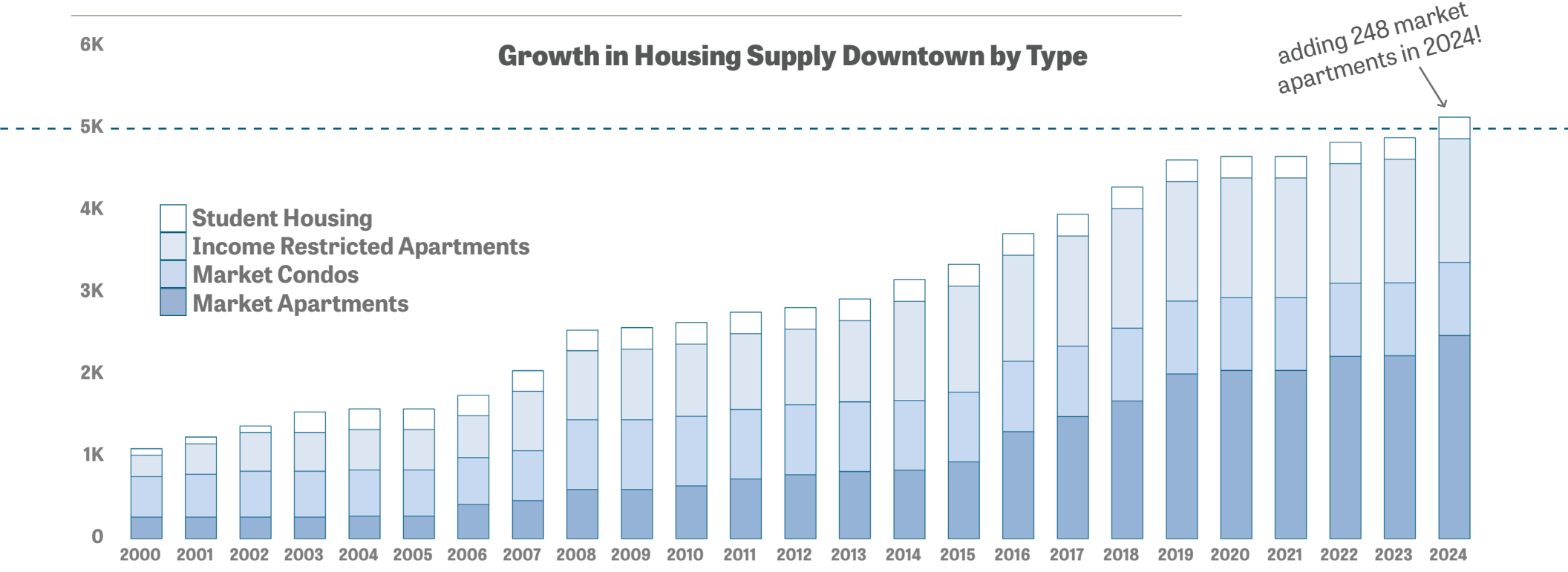
The Downtown Grand Rapids multi-unit housing market has seen a steady increase in asking rental price, which mirrors most markets, including the Michigan and Chicago markets. The average monthly asking rent per unit in 2023 was **$1,474**, which was higher than in Michigan ($1,166) but lower than Chicago ($1,656), as examples.

Not counting student housing, the affordability mix Downtown is stable at **32% affordable** and **66% market-rate**. This includes The Southgate at Wealthy St and Division Ave, which opened in January, adding 56 units to the Downtown housing inventory, 50 of which are affordable units.

With the anticipated completion of the Studio Park Residential Tower (190) and Wealthy & Sheldon Lofts (58), Downtown will officially exceed 5,000 housing units in 2024.

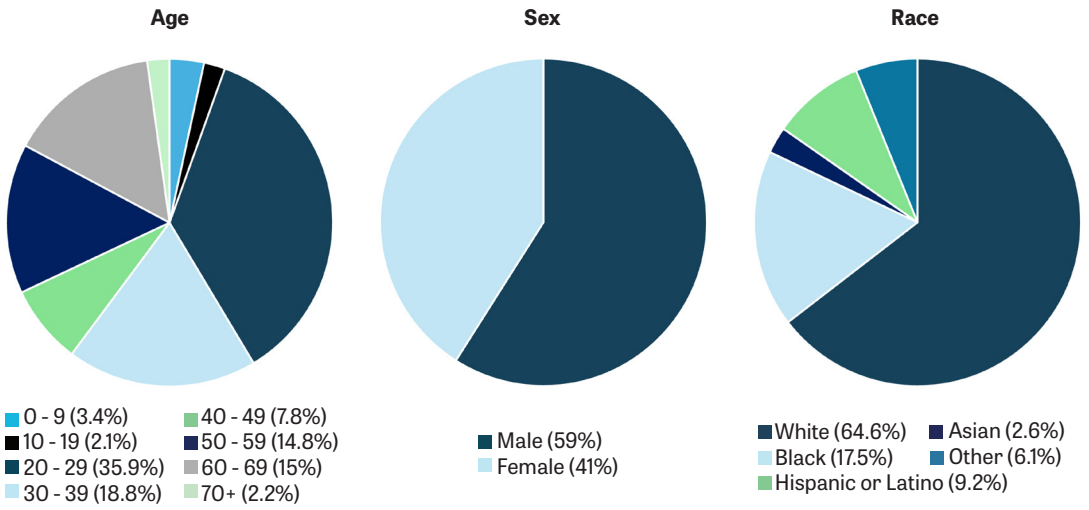
Unit Type Breakdown:
1% 4-Bed; 2% 3-Bed; 23% 2-Bed; 26% Studios; 48% 1-Bed





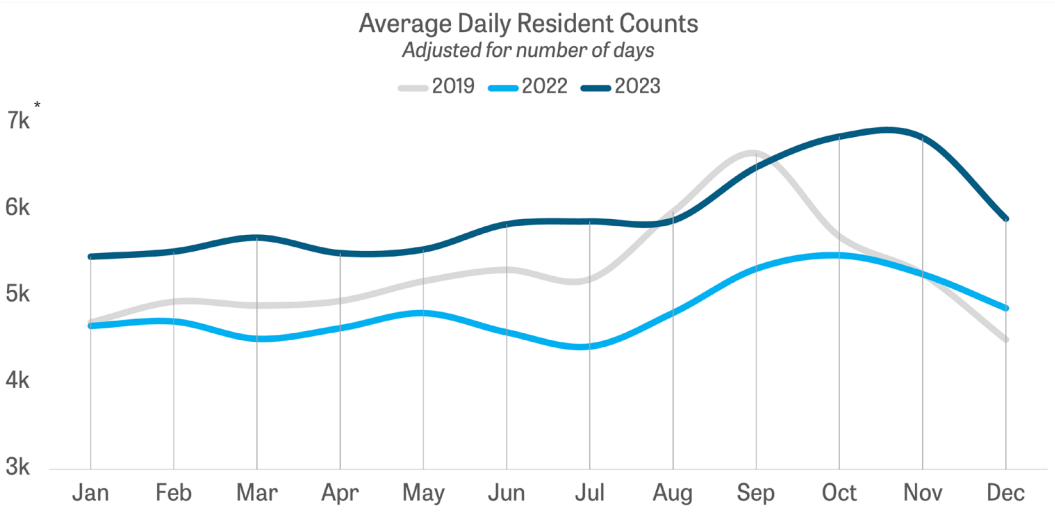
Source: CoStar & Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Downtown Residents



Source: US Census Bureau - Kent County Census Tract 20: 2021

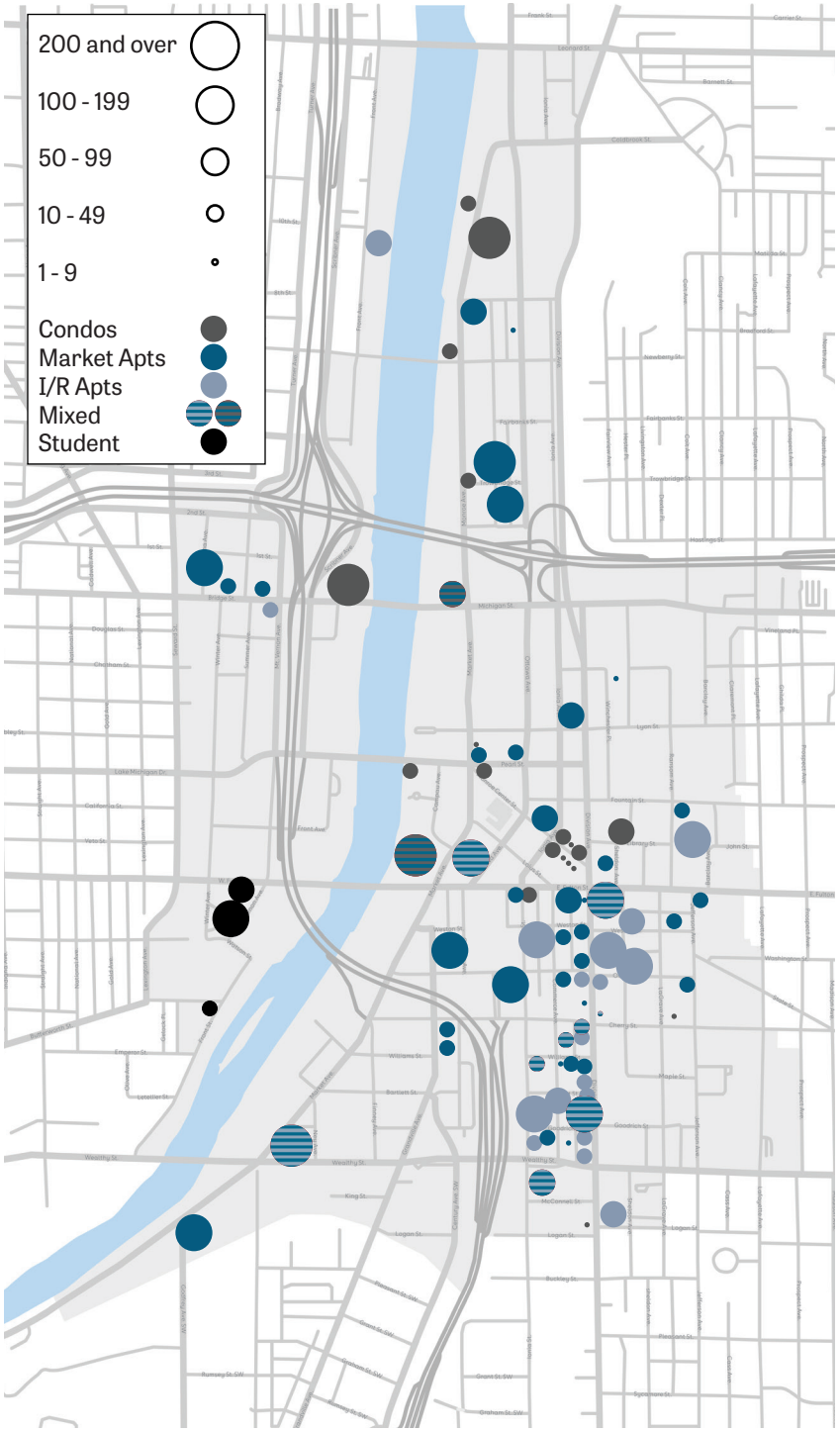
2023 exhibited strong resident activity numbers every month, especially when compared to the last 3 years. In addition to better public amenities and new safety enhancements, concerted neighbor efforts have brought more than 30 neighbor-specific events Downtown that drew over 650 residents, creating a stronger neighborhood community every day.



** y-axis truncated to highlight changes*

Source: Placer.ai

Downtown Housing Unit Locations by Type and Size



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids inc.

Downtown Construction & Development

Under Construction

1 Corewell Health Center for Transformation and Innovation
anticipated Q3 2024
+303k sq ft of office space
+1,090 parking spaces
+1,800 jobs across 26 buildings
$110M investment

2 Corewell Health Parking Structure

3 GRPM River's Edge Work
anticipated Q3 2024
$12M investment

4 Lyon Square Redevelopment
anticipated Q4 2024
$12M investment

5 Wealthy & Sheldon Lofts
anticipated Q4 2024
+58 housing units
+2,400 sq ft of commercial space
+30 parking spaces
$17.5M investment

6 Corewell Health Ambulatory Building
anticipated Q4 2024
+240k sq ft of office space
$20M investment

7 Studio Park Residential Tower
anticipated Q4 2024
+190 housing units
$52M investment

8 Silva
anticipated Q3 2024
+50k sq ft of commercial space
$15M investment

Completed

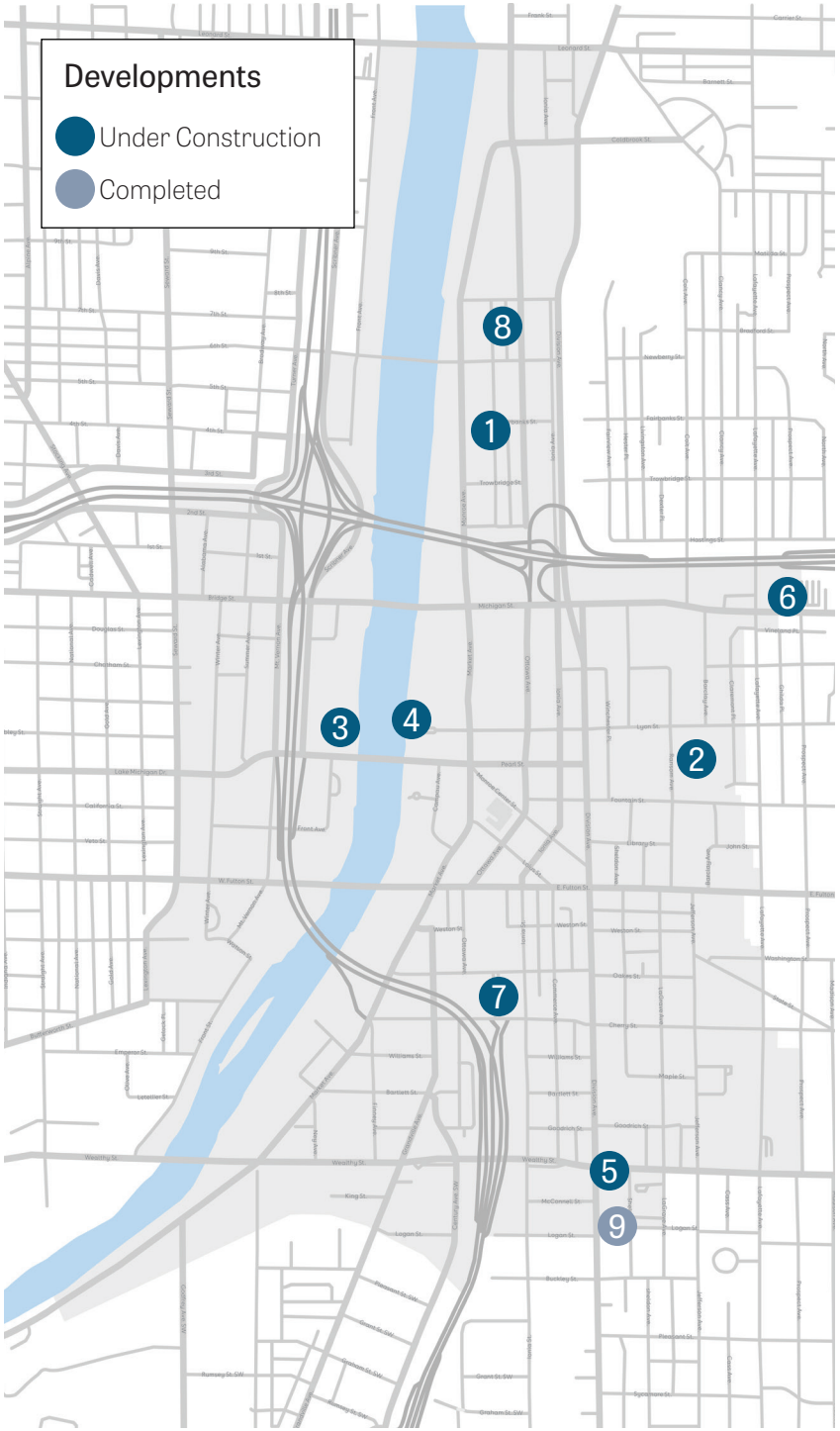
9 The Southgate
opened January 2023
+56 housing units
$19M investment

more than $277M

in investment under construction in 2023

Ringing in the new year, Downtown saw the opening of The Southgate, a senior living facility in Heartside, bringing 56 housing units to the market, 50 of which are income-restricted. Construction on Corewell Health's Center for Transformation and Innovation continued, a campus which is set to converge up to 1,800 jobs. Additionally, work on Corewell's Ambulatory Building moved forward, with a scheduled opening date in late 2024. Construction on the Studio Park Residential Tower advanced, and upon completion in 2024 will bring 190 new condos and rentals to the market.

Construction of 58-unit housing project at the corner of Wealthy & Sheldon commenced in June. In October, both Lyon Square, a public space project 10 years in the making, and the river's edge of the Public Museum began construction.



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Downtown Ambassadors

DGRI launched the Downtown Ambassador program in 2013. Initially focused on hospitality and pedestrian engagement, the Ambassadors' role was expanded in 2015 to include sidewalk cleaning, power washing, graffiti removal and horticultural services.

In 2022, the Downtown Improvement District recognized the need for resident-specific Ambassador services and as a result launched the Resident Engagement Ambassador program in 2023. Their focus is resident engagement, enhanced safety presence in the skywalk and other resident heavy portions of Downtown as well as providing an Ambassador presence at resident-specific events.

25
active Ambassadors

26
types of tasks tracked by the Ambassadors in their Smart System

2023 Testimonials

"Very pleasant Ambassador stopped into retail establishment to see how things are going. Thanked him for being out there for folks who come Downtown to shop or dine."

"I walk the skywalk at night. I love having an Ambassador there. It gives me a sense of security, and a friendly face. Keep up the good work!"

"So friendly and amazing. Very helpful and Downtown Ambassadors is a new thing to me. Every city should have those!"

Task	2022	2023
Plants & Flowers Planted	45,938	44,304
Cigarette Butts Collected & Recycled	177,500	183,000
Incidents of Graffiti Removed	3,415	5,721
Pounds of Trash Removed	434,325	457,100
Snow Removed	16,535	4,228
Weeds Pulled	190,393	263,415
Pedestrian Assists	163,588	374,857
Residents Engaged	-	1,466

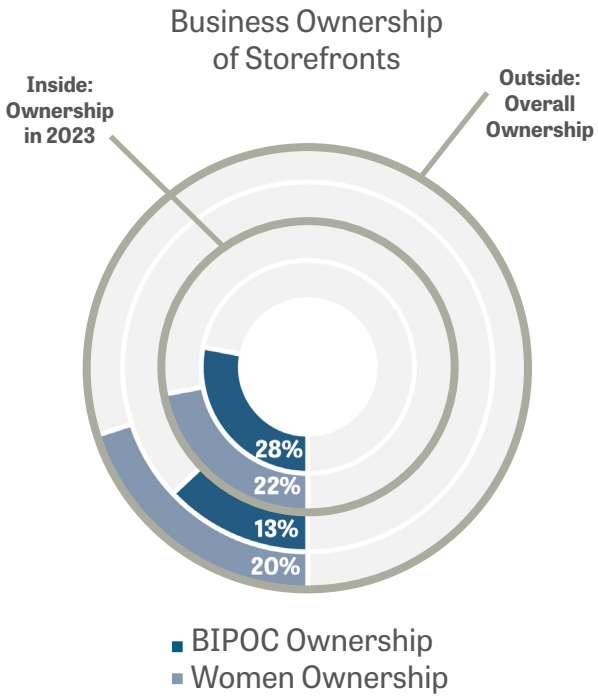
Downtown Ambassadors track these and many other statistics in the Block by Block Smart System. Each statistic is geo-coded and time stamped, as well as associated with the Ambassador who performed the task. For more information, visit www.downtowngr.org/our-work/projects/downtown-ambassadors

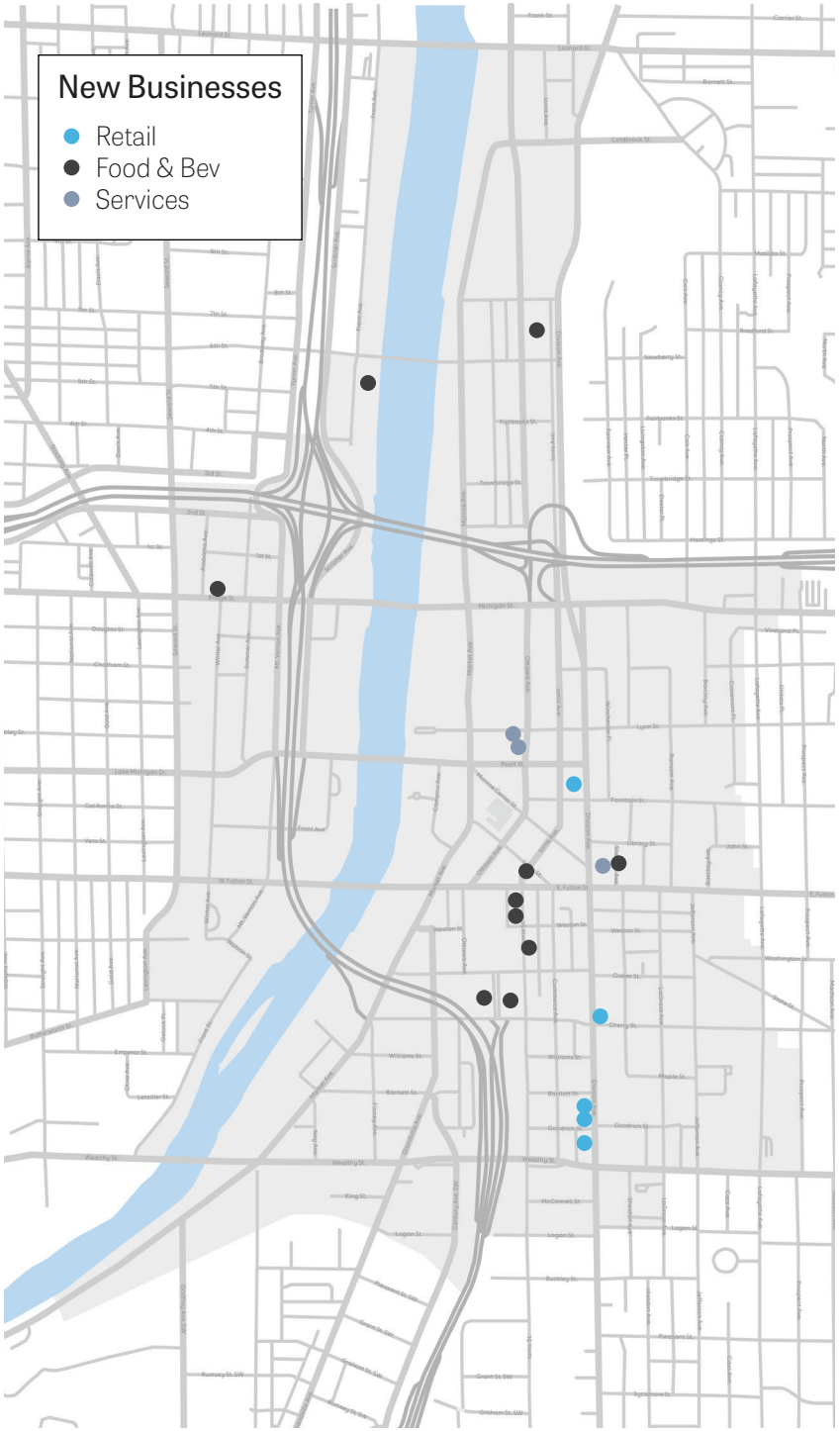
New Downtown Storefront Business Openings

Retail
Open Door Bakery
Celebri-T Floral & Design
One of a Kind Vintage
The August Connection
The Spark GR

Food & Beverage
Pochi's Sweet Designs
Elsa's
Chicago Beef Joint
5 Knives Café
The General Wood Shop
Daisies Place
Caribbean Bite
Scholar
[HAS HEART] Coffee Shop
The Foolery

Services
Key Bank
City Nail Bar
Crains Grand Rapids Offices





Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

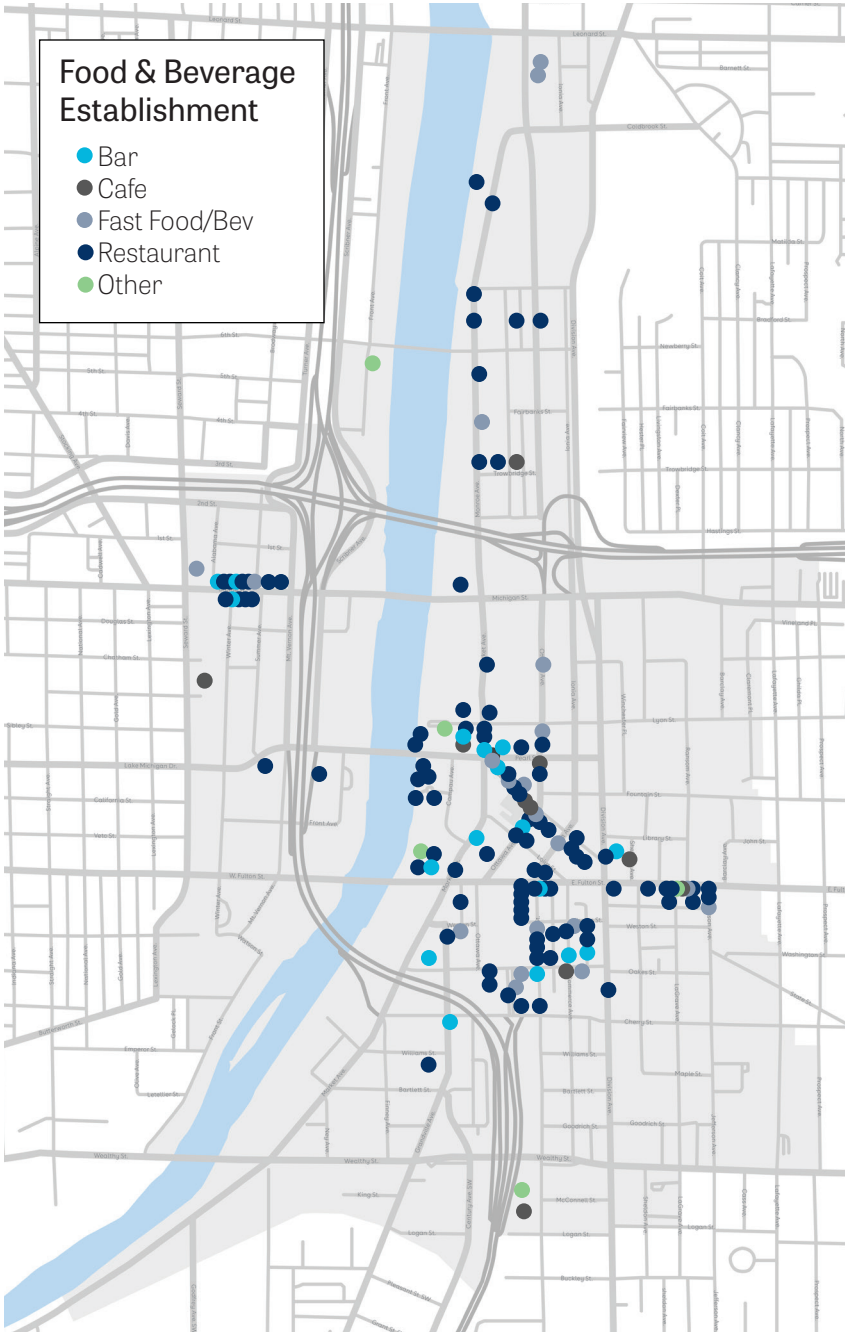
66K+

square feet of retail added since 2020

Why It Matters

There are **378 storefronts** in Downtown Grand Rapids spread across several retail corridors, each with its own identity. The average vacancy rate for the last 4 years is **20%**. Continuing work to fill vacancies is critical, along with intentional efforts to maintain retail amenities, offer new options and create active, lively corridors for the benefit of residents, employees and visitors.

Downtown Food & Beverage Establishments



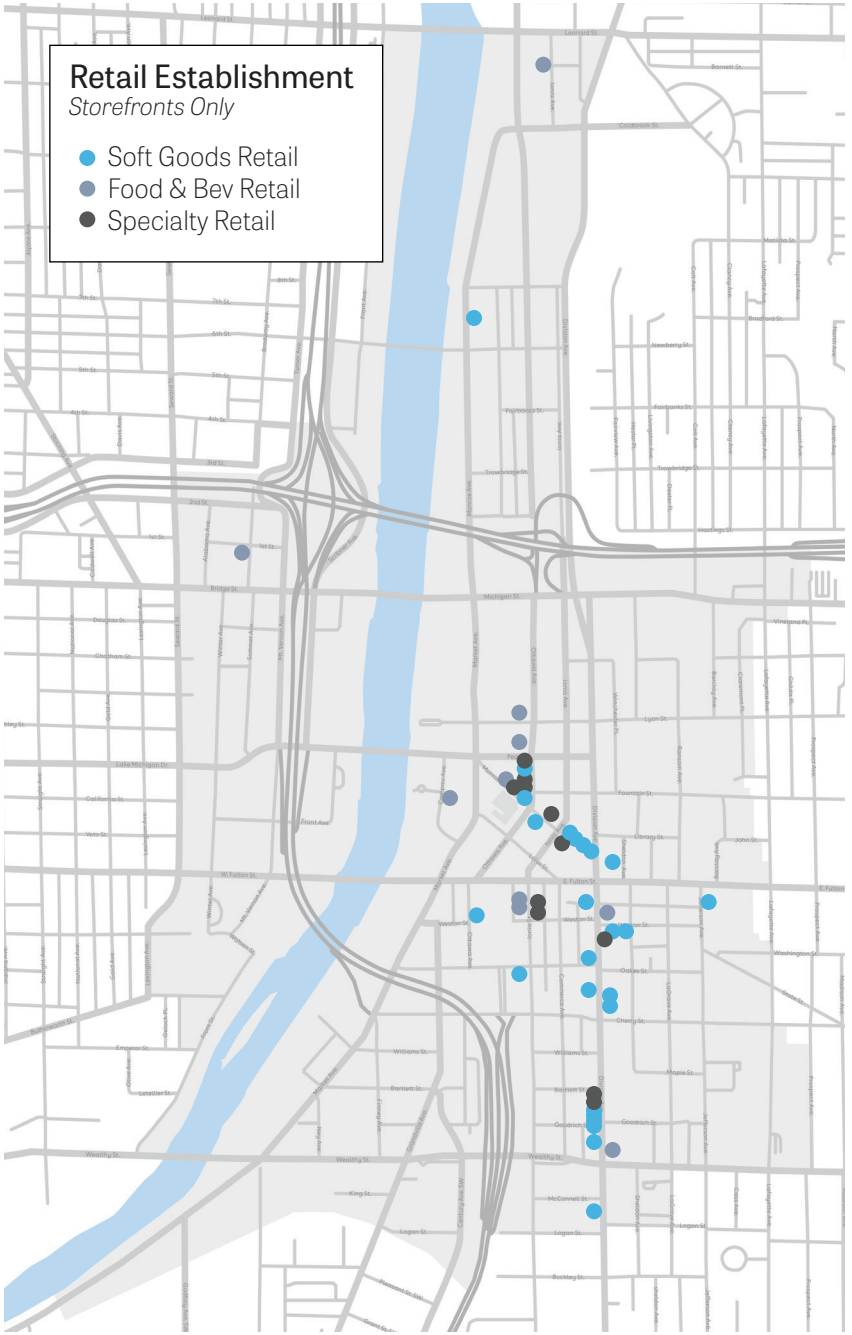
Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

44%
of storefronts are food & beverage establishments

16%
of storefronts are retail establishments

$17.92
average market asking rent in 2023 per square foot

Downtown Retail Establishments



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Downtown Art & Public Space Activation

Activity at Public Spaces

Location	2023 Average Dwell Time	Visitor Counts	vs. 2022	vs. 2019
555 Lot	*31 minutes*	*34,271*	*+157%*	*+187%*
Las Canchas	*83 minutes*	*10,744*	*+198%*	*N/A*
Skate Park	*41 minutes*	*14,063*	*-26%*	*+195%*

Source: Placer.ai

Public art has featured in Downtown Grand Rapids for decades. It provides identity, vibrancy and personality to public spaces. Currently, there are **157 murals** in Downtown Grand Rapids, including **47 stormdrain murals** and **21 parking lot ticket booth murals**. Other community projects include the Heartside Historic Mural initiative (13 murals to date), the Women's Way initiative (6 murals to date), the Rad American Women initiative (27 electrical box murals) and many contributions from ArtPrize over the years. There are also over **60 sculptures and statues** that hold permanent residence Downtown while countless temporary installations have come and gone. Art lovers can visit over **15 galleries and museums** and explore over **40 acres of parks and public greenspace**.

Activity at Public Events

Event	Visitor Counts	vs. 2022*	vs. 2019*
World of Winter	*4,754,174*	*+16%*	*-20%*
Return to the River	*11,050*	*+182%*	*N/A*

**adjusted for annual duration of each festival to calculate daily*

Source: Placer.ai



A crowd enjoying Silent Disco, a staple event at World of Winter.



Fans gathered for a musical performance at Return to the River.



The Downtown Skatepark & 555 Monroe, formerly a vacant parking lot.



Las Canchas Community Futsal Courts, formerly vacant parking lots.

Downtown Transit Access

The Rapid

Downtown is home to Rapid Central Station, which serves as the transporation hub for the majority of The Rapid's 26 regular routes. Adult rides cost $1.75 and discount pass options are available for frequent riders, students, seniors and individuals with qualifying disabilities.

GO!Bus

The Rapid also provides curb-to-curb ADA paratransit service via GO!Bus. This service is focused on individuals with disabilities but is also available to non-disabled seniors over the age of 65. GO!Bus is a shared ride, advance reservation service.

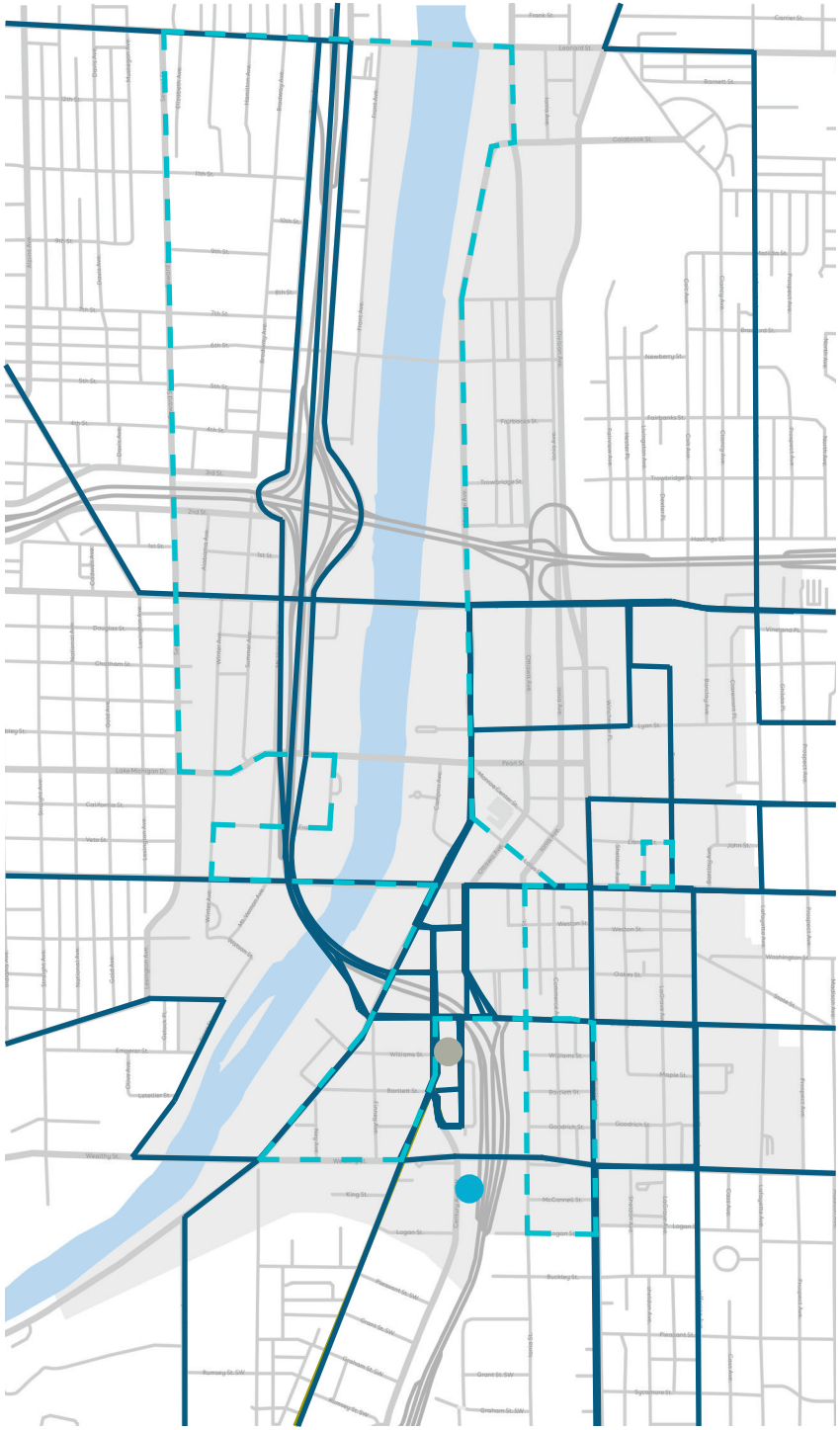
Rapid Connect

This is an on-demand service provided by The Rapid in portions of Walker and Kentwood designed to provide connections between employment hubs and The Rapid's fixed-route service.

Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH)

The DASH is a service provided by the City of Grand Rapids Mobile GR department and Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. This is a **free** transit service that connects residents, employees and visitors to Downtown destinations, jobs and parking lots. DASH was recently expanded to provide stronger connections to Downtown's near neighborhoods. Additional information about the service is available on the next page.

Bus Routes Accessible in Downtown

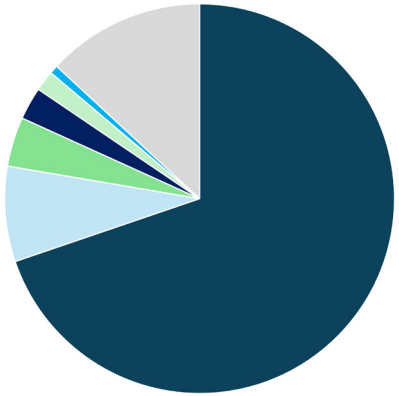


Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. & The Rapid

Legend

- DASH
- The Rapid Bus Routes
- Rapid Central Station
- Amtrak Train Station

Means of Transporation to Work 2022; Grand Rapids City



- Drove alone: 69.7%
- Carpooled: 7.9%
- Walked: 4.1%
- Public Transit: 2.7%
- Other: 1.7%
- Bicycle: 0.7%
- Worked from Home: 13.1%

Source: US Census Bureau

5.9M

Rapid rides in 2023, 10% increase vs. 2022

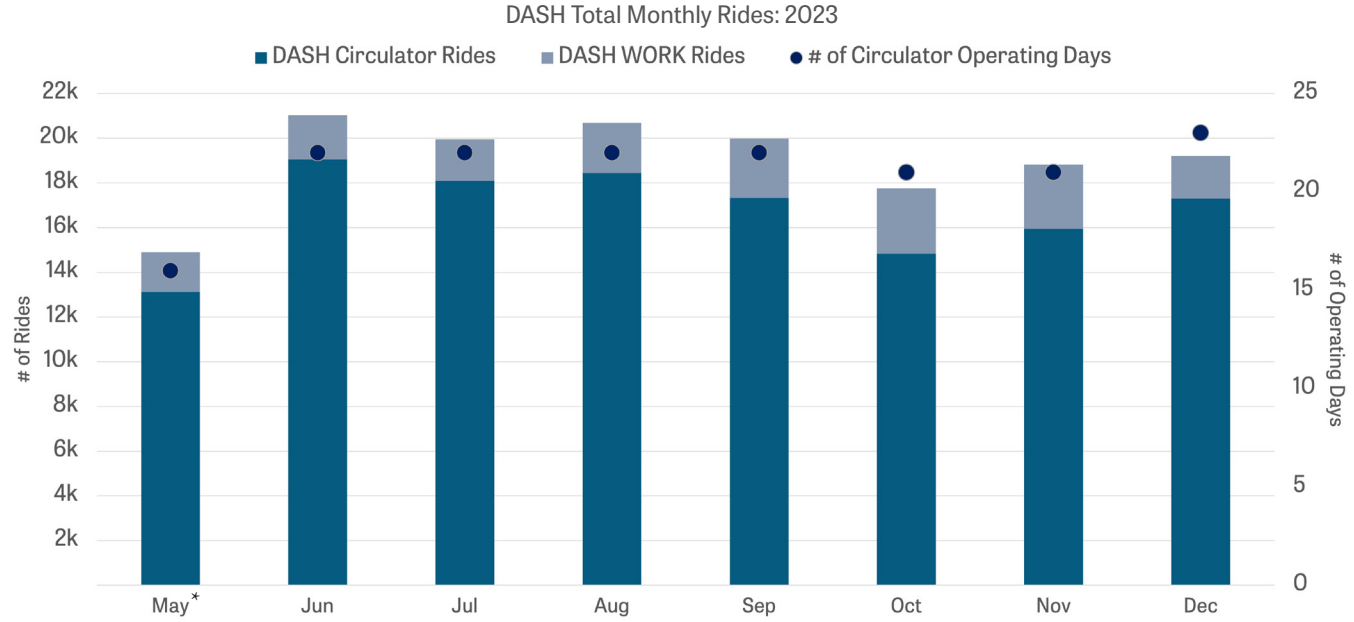
Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH)

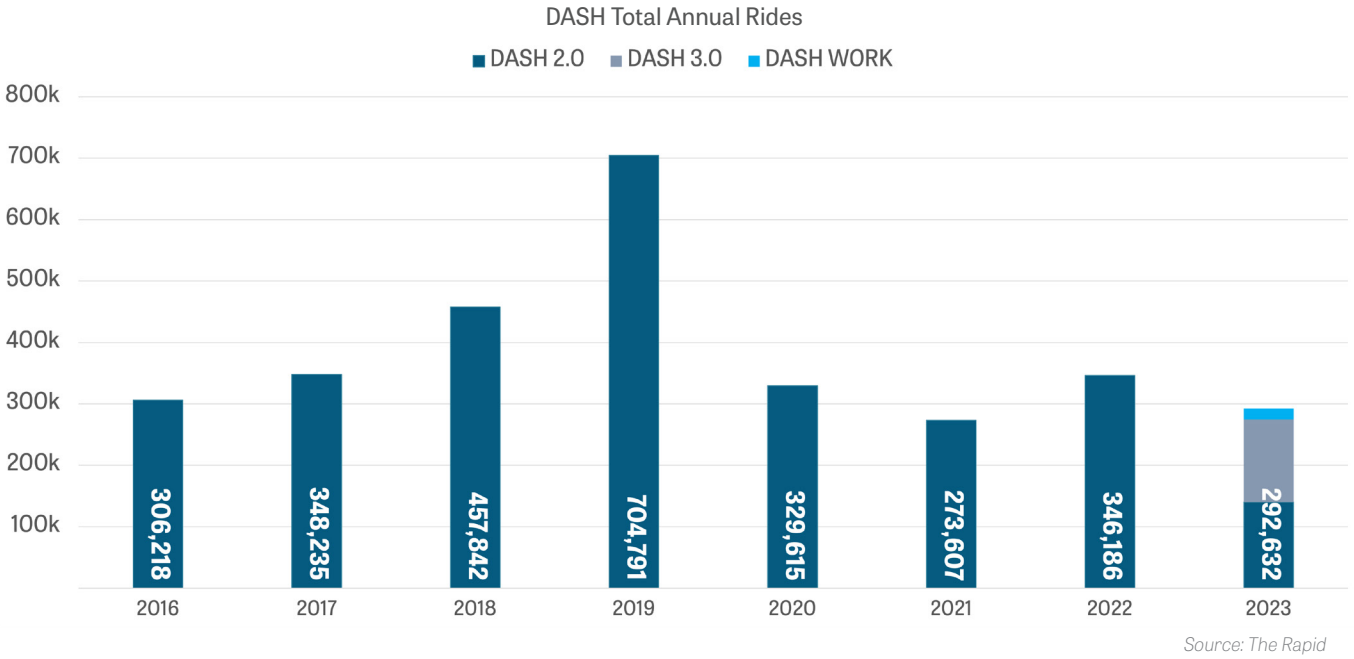
The **DASH Circulator**, the current iteration fo the DASH service, operates Wednesday through Sunday in 2023 on one route with two directions (Clockwise and Counterclockwise).

DASH service was adjusted in May 2023 to service additional destinations Downtown, as well as new stops on the Westside and Leonard Street. Service is available seven days a week. DASH is supplemented by the **DASH WORK** service, which runs on weekdays and connects Downtown employees directly to commuter parking lots on the Westside. On average, the highest ridership for DASH took place between 11 AM and 5 PM, Wednesday to Friday.

Some of the busiest stops on DASH include Bridge Street Market, Main Library, Downtown Market, and the Public Museum. This aligns with the new goal of the DASH to circulate visitors and other users to some of the main Downtown attractions.

In 2024, DASH resumes service on Mondays and Tuesdays.





Source: The Rapid

** May service started on 5/10/23*
N.B.: No service on Thanksgiving Day (11/23/23)
Number of operating days: May: 16; Jun: 22; Jul: 22; Aug: 22; Sep: 22; Oct 21; Nov: 21

Data Sources

AHC Hospitality
Block by Block
Bureau of Labor Statistics
City of Grand Rapids
City of Grand Rapids Mobile GR Department
CoStar Analytics
Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
Placer Labs, Inc.
The Rapid Interurban Transit Partnership
US Census Bureau
Synergos Technologies, Inc

For more information or data inquires, please visit ***downtowngr.org*** *or contact* ***info@downtowngr.org***

Special thanks to the boards of the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Improvement District, the Monroe North Tax Increment Financing Authority, as well as DGRI's Executive Committee, Board of Advisors, and Citizen Alliance, for their continued trust and efforts in moving GR Forward.

Published June 2024



A crowd at Relax at Rosa, a mainstay in Downtown events.