



**TO:** Douglas Downtown Development Authority  
**FROM:** Lisa Nocerini, City Manager  
**DATE:** September 2026  
**SUBJECT:** DDA Community Survey Results – Discussion

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### **Background**

The Downtown Development Authority recently conducted a community survey to gather feedback regarding Downtown Douglas, including what people currently value about downtown, what businesses and uses they would like to see added, potential future uses of the former Police Department property, and priorities for the future of the downtown district.

The survey received 289 responses from residents, property owners, business owners, seasonal residents, visitors, employees, and others connected to the Douglas community.

The attached Survey Results provide a breakdown of the responses received and identify several recurring themes related to dining and retail opportunities, entertainment and live music, year-round business activity, public spaces and the waterfront, housing, and preservation of Douglas's small-town and historic character.

### **Discussion**

The Survey Results are being provided to the DDA for review and discussion. The information is intended to help the Board better understand community feedback as it continues conversations regarding downtown development, business recruitment and retention, public spaces, future projects, and other DDA priorities.

The Board may also wish to discuss how the survey results can be used as a reference when considering future DDA initiatives and opportunities.

**Recommended Action:** Discussion only. No formal action is requested at this time.

**Attachment:** DDA Survey Results Breakdown

# Douglas Downtown Authority Survey Responses

September 15, 2026

## Survey participation

The survey received 289 responses.

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### Connection to Douglas Responses Share

|                         |     |       |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Full-time resident      | 146 | 50.5% |
| Property owner          | 42  | 14.5% |
| Seasonal resident       | 36  | 12.5% |
| Business owner          | 21  | 7.3%  |
| Visitor                 | 14  | 4.8%  |
| Employee in Douglas     | 6   | 2.1%  |
| Other/local connections | 24  | 8.3%  |

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Respondents were highly familiar with downtown:

- 106 visit several times per week.
- 87 visit daily.
- 53 visit weekly.
- Altogether, 246 respondents—85%—visit at least weekly.

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## What people currently value

Respondents most frequently selected:

### Existing downtown strength Responses Share

|                        |     |       |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Restaurants and dining | 200 | 69.2% |
|------------------------|-----|-------|

### **Existing downtown strength Responses Share**

|                       |     |       |
|-----------------------|-----|-------|
| Small-town atmosphere | 193 | 66.8% |
| Walkability           | 154 | 53.3% |
| Events and festivals  | 110 | 38.1% |
| Arts and culture      | 94  | 32.5% |
| Shopping              | 84  | 29.1% |
| Historic character    | 81  | 28.0% |
| Waterfront access     | 58  | 20.1% |

The results show strong support for protecting the community's character, scale, walkability, and locally oriented atmosphere.

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### **What respondents believe is missing**

| <b>Identified need</b>           | <b>Responses Share</b> |       |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Additional dining options        | 187                    | 64.7% |
| Retail shopping                  | 146                    | 50.5% |
| Entertainment venues             | 105                    | 36.3% |
| Outdoor recreation opportunities | 56                     | 19.4% |
| Housing                          | 56                     | 19.4% |
| Public gathering spaces          | 46                     | 15.9% |
| Family-friendly activities       | 38                     | 13.1% |
| Arts and cultural spaces         | 36                     | 12.5% |
| Professional services            | 21                     | 7.3%  |

Dining, retail, and entertainment stand out as the three most significant perceived gaps.

### **Businesses and uses people want added**

| <b>Desired business or use</b> | <b>Responses Share</b> |       |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Bakery                         | 141                    | 48.8% |
| Live music venue               | 137                    | 47.4% |
| Restaurant                     | 123                    | 42.6% |
| Boutique retail                | 92                     | 31.8% |
| Bookstore                      | 84                     | 29.1% |
| Wellness or fitness facility   | 68                     | 23.5% |
| Wine bar                       | 66                     | 22.8% |
| Performing arts venue          | 65                     | 22.5% |
| Brewery or taproom             | 65                     | 22.5% |
| Senior housing                 | 53                     | 18.3% |
| Workforce housing              | 52                     | 18.0% |
| Mixed-use development          | 51                     | 17.6% |
| Outdoor recreation business    | 46                     | 15.9% |

A bakery, live music venue, and additional restaurant received the strongest support. Respondents also showed meaningful interest in housing, wellness, arts, and mixed-use development.

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### **Former Police Department property**

The most-supported uses were:

| <b>Potential use</b> | <b>Responses Share</b> |       |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Restaurant           | 196                    | 67.8% |
| Retail space         | 162                    | 56.1% |

| Potential use              | Responses Share |       |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Café or coffee shop        | 113             | 39.1% |
| Mixed-use development      | 110             | 38.1% |
| Community meeting space    | 85              | 29.4% |
| Art gallery                | 81              | 28.0% |
| Residential use            | 65              | 22.5% |
| Visitor information center | 39              | 13.5% |
| Office space               | 29              | 10.0% |

The results strongly favor an active, public-facing commercial use. A restaurant or retail-oriented mixed-use project appears most consistent with public preferences. Office space received comparatively limited support.

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Written responses frequently combined:

- A restaurant, café, bakery, or other food use
- Retail on the ground floor
- Housing or residential use above
- Community, art, or gathering space
- A business capable of operating year-round

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### Desired identity for Downtown Douglas

When asked what downtown should be known for in ten years, the leading responses were:

| Desired identity         | Responses Share |       |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Dining destination       | 66              | 22.8% |
| Arts and culture         | 49              | 17.0% |
| Small-business community | 44              | 15.2% |

| Desired identity           | Responses Share |       |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Historic character         | 35              | 12.1% |
| Family-friendly atmosphere | 28              | 9.7%  |
| Entertainment and events   | 18              | 6.2%  |
| Shopping destination       | 16              | 5.5%  |
| Waterfront recreation      | 12              | 4.2%  |
| Housing opportunities      | 10              | 3.5%  |

No single identity dominated. Instead, respondents appear to support a combination of dining, arts, locally owned businesses, and historic character.

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#### Improvements that would increase downtown visits

| Improvement                               | Responses Share |       |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| More restaurants serving lunch            | 174             | 60.2% |
| More year-round businesses                | 143             | 49.5% |
| Expanded evening and weekend hours        | 118             | 40.8% |
| More entertainment or live music          | 114             | 39.4% |
| More retail shopping options              | 100             | 34.6% |
| More outdoor seating and gathering spaces | 60              | 20.8% |
| More community events and activities      | 56              | 19.4% |
| More convenient parking                   | 43              | 14.9% |
| Additional public restrooms               | 17              | 5.9%  |
| Better pedestrian and bicycle amenities   | 16              | 5.5%  |

The findings suggest that existing businesses' availability may be nearly as important as recruiting new businesses. Lunch service, consistent hours, evenings, weekends, and year-round operations were repeatedly emphasized.

## **Recurring written-comment themes**

The open-ended responses reinforced several themes:

- Better use of Wade's Bayou and the waterfront, including seating, recreation, boating access, dining, music, and community events
- More restaurants, particularly lunch, bakery, café, affordable, casual, and takeout options
- More consistent and year-round business hours
- Live music, performing arts, festivals, and activities for different age groups
- Preservation of Douglas's historic, quiet, and small-town character
- More green space, landscaping, trees, seating, and attractive public gathering areas
- Housing that supports year-round residents, workers, and seniors
- Improved connections between downtown destinations through walking, biking, transit, parking, and wayfinding
- Continued attention to Beery Field, the former Police Department property, Wade's Bayou, and Blue Star Highway

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## **Overall conclusions**

The survey points toward five broad priorities:

1. Recruit and support additional dining, especially lunch, bakery, café, casual, and year-round options.
2. Encourage active commercial or mixed use of the former Police Department property, with restaurant and retail uses receiving the strongest support.
3. Expand entertainment, live music, arts, events, and public gathering opportunities.
4. Improve use of Wade's Bayou, Beery Field, and other public spaces while enhancing landscaping, seating, and waterfront access.
5. Preserve Douglas's small-town and historic character as development occurs.