



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Downtown San Diego Partnership Announces Results of 2021 Downtown Demographics Study** *First Study Since 2016 Confirms Post-Pandemic Downtown San Diego is Primed for Continued Growth and Investment*

**SAN DIEGO – April 27, 2022** – The Downtown San Diego Partnership, together with the City of San Diego and San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC) released the findings from the [2021 Downtown Demographics Study](#). Among findings about Downtown’s residential population, workforce, and attractions, the study confirmed that Downtown is uniquely primed for a post-pandemic resurgence of residential and business growth due to several key factors.

“What we found most exciting about this research is that it confirmed through data what we’ve long heard from Downtown residents and stakeholders,” said **Betsy Brennan, president & CEO for the Downtown San Diego Partnership**. “Downtown is primed with a talented residential workforce that desires to live and work in our urban core. This, in combination with ongoing investment in world-class commercial and research spaces with access to the region’s enhanced transit system and a vibrant neighborhood lifestyle for residents, businesses and visitors alike, tells us that there is no better time to invest in Downtown.”

Led by EDC, in coordination with UC San Diego Extension’s Center for Research and Evaluation, the update provides new data on the residential and workforce populations of San Diego’s urban core, identifies areas for growth, opportunities for investment and advocacy, as well as a benchmark for the impacts of COVID-19. It’s intent is to serve as a helpful tool for anyone hoping to understand Downtown’s unique makeup and continue to fuel decisions to advance the economic prosperity and cultural vitality of the city’s urban core for years to come.

The study found that investment in residential and commercial spaces remains strong. Moreover, the residential population has an excess of well-educated, high-skilled, and in-demand talent who would prefer to live and work in the same amenitized community. This talent pool, combined with an increasing supply of commercial real estate, presents timely opportunities for high growth companies.

“Downtown is an economic engine for our region – both historically and into the future,” said **Christina Bibler, Economic Development Director for the City of San Diego** and one of

several study funders. “The City of San Diego is driven by data to inform policy and city initiatives and this data demonstrates that the urban core is uniquely well-positioned for post-pandemic investment. In fact, it is already underway. A thriving Downtown can serve as a catalyst for the entire city and ensure a San Diego for all of us.”

The pandemic had noticeable impacts in urban metros across the nation, and San Diego was no exception. Job losses in the hospitality and tourism industries during 2020 erased the gains of the previous four years as this legacy industry cluster proved more vulnerable to the unique challenges of COVID-19. Not only has this study provided a moment in time from which to track this industry’s recovery as business travel continues to return and tourism continues to be a pillar of the Downtown market, but it also demonstrates that industry diversification will help San Diego’s urban center be more resilient in the years to come.

“While San Diego’s innovation economy continues to drive the region’s recovery from the COVID-19-spurred economic downturn, we must ensure the building blocks of this recovering economy—quality jobs, skilled talent and thriving households—are accessible to more people,” said **Mark Cafferty, president and CEO of EDC**. “The data confirms that the pillars to build a more resilient economy through continued investment into Downtown by new, growing and diversified industries are in place and ready. More than ever, smart inclusive development means inclusive economic development.”

Prioritizing diversity in Downtown industries is just one critical component to ensure Downtown’s resilience into the future. With over 37,000 residents who value the walkability, proximity to regional transit and arts and cultural opportunities of the urban community, Downtown continues to be a highly desirable location to live and work.

Yet like all of San Diego, the study indicated Downtown must continue to create opportunities for housing across incomes while continuing to lead by example in the concentration of affordable housing. In fact, according to the City’s [2021 Annual Housing Report](#), the development of affordable housing continues to outpace the rest of the city – with Downtown seeing more than four times as many affordable housing units under construction in the last decade (2,417) than the second-highest community plan (Mission Valley at 547).

“What is clear, and most encouraging from this recent study, is that Downtown has proven resilient and continues to lead the way in affordable housing production - but there is more to do,” said **Councilmember Stephen Whitburn**, whose district includes Downtown. “In the face of rising housing costs across the region, Downtown has an opportunity to continue to offer a blend of housing options for residents that is unmatched in other communities. Thoughtful residential investment, alongside diversification of industry within the Downtown core, can help to build a community which better reflects the city as a whole.”

The Downtown Partnership first commissioned a demographic study in 2016, then a new tool for the organization’s advocacy efforts and the Downtown community. Providing an in-depth look at San Diego’s urban core and capturing a moment in time of the market’s recovery following the pandemic, the 2021 study was funded by the City of San Diego’s Economic Development Department, DSDP Clean & Safe Commercial Enhancement Program, Stockdale Capital Partners, and Urban Strategies Group.

For more information, please visit the Downtown San Diego Partnership’s website: <https://downtownsandiego.org/downtown-demographics-study/>.

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**About the Downtown San Diego Partnership:**

The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a nonprofit organization that serves as the principal voice and driving force behind the economic and cultural prosperity of Downtown San Diego through membership, advocacy, and public services. It also serves as the managing organization for several special districts including the Clean & Safe program that provide essential public services in the 275 blocks of Downtown. For more information, visit [downtownsandiego.org](http://downtownsandiego.org).