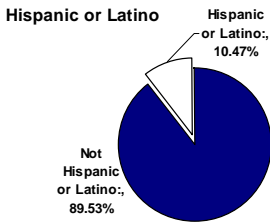


# 2 Downtown Profile

The profile describes downtown’s current characteristics. This chapter provides a summary of the most recent data and conditions for demographics, land use, promotions and activities, and circulation and transportation. Analyzing the existing conditions provides a picture of where we are right now. The information is then used to identify areas of improvement. Also, it serves as a baseline for measuring the success of plan implementation.

## Downtown Demographics

Census data is provided at the Block Group Level to study the demographic characteristics of downtown. There are three block groups in three different census tracts. The combination of the three block groups consists of a larger area than just the existing redevelopment district, but provides insight to the general area of downtown. The data available at the block group level is derived from the 2000 census. Bentonville has experienced a 30% increase in the population between 2000 and 2004. Therefore, the numbers presented below are lower than actual numbers. However, these should provide an idea of the general characteristics of the downtown population and housing. Detailed demographic tables are provided in Appendix B.

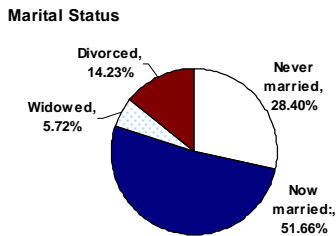


### Population

- Approximately 4,500 residents live in the downtown area. This is 23% of the total population of Bentonville.

### Race

- The area predominantly is Caucasian (88%).
- The significant minority populations are American Indians (3.3%) and Asians (2.34%).
- This data is fairly representative with the rest of Bentonville.
- Approximately 10.5% of the downtown population is Hispanic or Latino. This is higher than the rest of Bentonville, where 6% of the population is Hispanic or Latino.



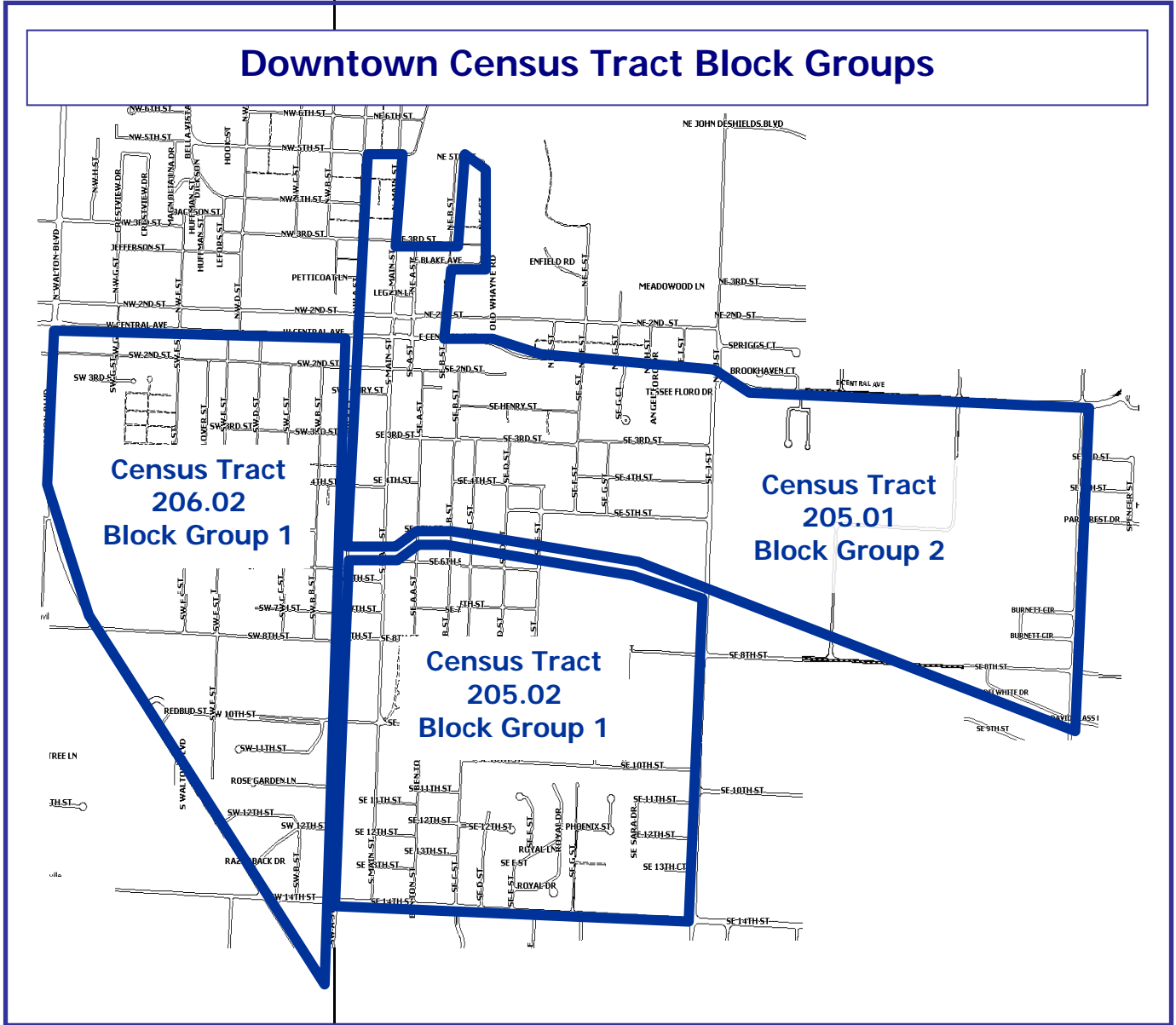
### Gender

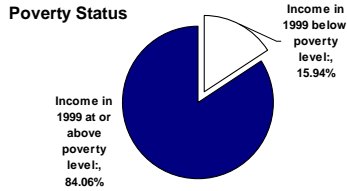
- There are slightly more females than males, which is consistent with the whole of Bentonville.

### Age

- The age group with the largest percentage of the downtown population is the 35 to 39 age group, with 10.45% and the next largest percentage is ages 25 to 29, with 10.09%. The third highest is the ages between 15 and 19 with almost 9% of the downtown population. These percentages are slightly higher than compared with the same age groups in the city as a whole.
- There is a higher percentage of persons in the 65 to 79 age group than compared with the rest of the city as a whole.

## Downtown Census Tract Block Groups





**Marital Status**

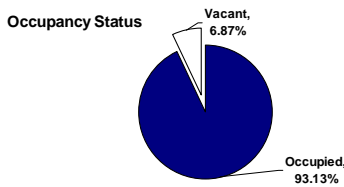
- Just slightly more than half of the downtown population over age 15 is married, which is lower than compared with Bentonville.
- Approximately 28% have never been married, which is higher than compared with Bentonville.
- 14% are divorced and approximately 6% are widowed. Both of which are higher than compared with Bentonville.

**Children**

- There are over 600 children between the ages of 0-11 in the downtown area. Approximately one-third of those are in single parent households.
- There are approximately 350 children between the ages of 12 and 17 in the downtown area. Almost half of those children are in single parent households.

**Income**

- Median household income in 1999 was \$30,956, which is significantly less than the whole of Bentonville which was \$39,936.
- As a percentage, there are more people on public assistance (6.56%) in the downtown as compared with the whole of Bentonville (2.81%).
- As a percentage, there are less people with retirement income (6.39%) in the downtown as compared with the whole of Bentonville (8.32%).
- As a percentage, there are more people with an income in 1999 below the poverty level (apx. 16%) as compared with the whole of Bentonville (10.5%).

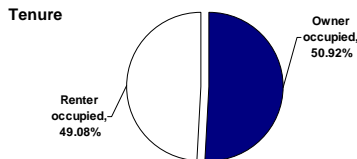


**Education**

- The downtown population without a high school degree or equivalency (apx. 31%) is significantly higher than the whole of Bentonville (16.5%).
- The percentages of high school degrees and associate degrees are comparable with the whole of Bentonville.
- There is a significant difference when it comes to a Bachelor's degree. The downtown area has 9 ½% with a bachelor's degree and the whole of Bentonville is 19.8% with a bachelor's degree.

**Employment**

- 71% of the population over age 16 is in the labor force in the downtown area, which is comparable with the whole of Bentonville.
- A higher percentage of people in the downtown area walk to work than the whole of Bentonville.
- A higher percent of people in the downtown area work at home than the whole of Bentonville.



**Housing**

- A total of 1,186 housing units are in the downtown area.
- Approximately 93% of the structures are occupied and almost 7% are vacant.
- Approximately 20% of all structures are three or four unit structures.
- Most homes are valued in the \$50,000 to \$99,999 range with 63.63%. Bentonville as a whole has 4.17% of the housing stock valued in the same range.
- No structures are valued over \$200,000.
- The most common rent is in the \$500 to \$599 range.
- Approximately 15% of the structures were built prior to 1960, 20% were built in the 1970's, and more than 40% have been built since 1990.

- Approximately half of the structures are owner-occupied and half are renter-occupied.

### **Language**

- Approximately 40 households are linguistically isolated, meaning that no one in the households speaks English. Thirty of those are in Asian language households and 10 are in Spanish speaking households.

### **Conclusions**

The demographic conditions of downtown are unique and are not necessarily representative of the City as a whole. These differences present opportunities for the continued revitalization of downtown.

First, a significant portion of the city's population, approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$ , lives in the downtown area, presenting an existing market for retail, restaurants, and service type businesses. The downtown population is predominantly younger, who tend to have more sophisticated tastes, but tend to bargain shop because they still have relatively low-incomes (*Source: Destination Downtown Overland Park – Economic Profile/Market Niche Report*).

Second, the significant number of renter-occupied households and the lower home values provide a moderate-income housing stock that is not prevalent elsewhere in the city. Again, because the younger population has less income, they tend to rent. There may be a need for housing rehabilitation and a closer look into code enforcement in order to help maintain moderate level property values and encourage moderate income households to reside here.

Third, 32 percent of children downtown live in single-parent households. Almost 78 percent of women with children under the age of 18 are working and 66% of those with children under the age of six are working. Because of time limitations, single-parents and working moms are often looking for convenience – especially when it comes to grocery shopping and dining options (*Source: Destination Downtown Overland Park – Economic Profile/Market Niche Report*).

Fourth, there are approximately 950 children under the age of 18 living downtown. The generation between the ages of 5 and 22 is estimated to influence as much as 80 percent of the decisions for some food purchases. They are media savvy and computer literate (*Source: Destination Downtown Overland Park – Economic Profile/Market Niche Report*).

**Commercial Inventory**

**Retail**

- Florists
- Artwork and framing
- Gifts
- Office supplies
- Home décor
- Groceries
- Jewelry
- Hair salons
- Gas station
- Auto sales and rental
- Women’s apparel
- Cleaners
- Videos
- Sewing supplies
- Bath shop

**Restaurants**

- The Station Café
- Big Guy’s Sub’s
- Mexican DeLite
- Pizza Pro

**Museums**

- Wal-Mart Five and Dime Museum

**Offices**

- Wal-Mart General Offices
- Sam’s Office
- Bentonville Plaza
- Vendor offices
- Attorneys
- Financial institutions
- Government offices

**Housing Inventory**

- 1,186 housing units in the downtown area.
- Approximately 20% of all structures are three or four unit structures.
- Approximately half of the structures are owner occupied and half are renter occupied.
- There are approximately 14 structures with 10 or more units.

**Downtown Land Use**

In the Winter of 2004, city staff conducted a windshield survey to identify the existing land uses. Land uses are categorized into commercial, industrial, residential, public facilities, and parks and trails. The land use condition is current as of January 2004. An existing land use map is provided in Appendix C.

**Commercial**

Commercial land uses, including office, retail and services are concentrated in the Square District and Central Commercial District. Offices are the most predominant commercial use consisting of Wal-Mart offices, vendors and attorneys.

The single largest commercial use, in terms of size and employees, is the Wal-Mart General Office and Sam’s Office, located on the northeast corner of Walton Blvd and SW 8<sup>th</sup> St. The next largest commercial use is the Bentonville Plaza; a nine-story building across from the Wal-Mart General Office. These three facilities alone bring in a significant number of people to the downtown area every day.

Restaurants and retail are interspersed among the commercial offices. Most retail type activity is occurring around the square. Area residents and office personnel benefit from the mixture of personal services including groceries, dry cleaning, gas and videos. Specialty retail, specifically home interiors and design, has a strong presence with at least four shops. There are five small restaurants that cater to the lunch crowd from nearby offices. Two more are anticipated to open around the square by early 2005.

The challenge with the current commercial land use mix is that the offices are on a nine-to-five schedule and most of the retail stores are not open past five p.m. Therefore, there is very limited activity after-hours.

**Industrial**

Although industrial have the potential to negatively impact surrounding properties, the few located downtown appear to be good neighbors to residents and businesses. There are no industrial uses in the Square District. There is a small industrial area in the East Residential District that houses the City’s facilities for streets, electric, water and sewer on SW 3<sup>rd</sup> St.

The rest of the industrial uses are in the Central Commercial District. The school district has a warehouse facility at the corner of SW Main St and SW 10<sup>th</sup> St. Bentonville Plastics is located between SW A St and SW Main St., just north of SW 8<sup>th</sup> St. The Farmer’s Exchange is also located along SW A St. There is a windows and siding warehouse located between SW A St. and SW Main St., north of SW 11<sup>th</sup> St. These industrial uses along the major thoroughfare of SW A Street present challenges to redevelopment. They are businesses that have been located in this area for a long time and have an industrial appearance.

**Residential**

Residential land use is critical to a successful downtown. It provides a portion of the market for retail and restaurant businesses. According to 2000 Census data, there is already a strong residential presence. Housing is mixed within the commercial areas as well as located on the outer edges of such districts.

**Public Facilities Inventory**

- County Courthouse
- City Hall
- City Technical Services Building
- City Street, Water and Electric Building
- Fire Station
- First Baptist Church
- First Methodist Church
- Old High Middle School
- Library
- Benton County Fairgrounds

**Park Inventory**

- **Square Park**  
(1.0 acre) - mini park
- **Dave Peel Park**  
(2.0 acres)- mini park with play equipment, picnic pavilion, and restrooms
- **Train Station Park** (1.0 acre) – mini park with gazebo
- **“F” Street Park**  
(3.0 acres) – mini park with picnic tables
- **Town Branch Park** – (.78 acres) mini park with trail and gazebo

**Trail Inventory**

- Town Branch Trail
- Heritage Trail

**Promotions Inventory:**

- Full page ad in paper once a month
- Television and newspaper advertising for Winter Wonderland
- Billboard near Presidential Library in Little Rock.
- Parking map

Residential land uses consists of a mixture of single-family, duplex, and limited multi-family. There is one building that offers second story loft apartments above commercial offices – NW corner of SE 8<sup>th</sup> St. and SW A St.

**Public Facilities**

Public land uses are concentrated in the downtown study area. These are anchor facilities that produce spin-off businesses and services. These facilities include city and county government buildings, the public library, schools and churches. The County Administration and County Courthouse are both located in the square district. The City Administration Building, Technical Services Building, Fire Station No. 1 and the Municipal Facilities Buildings are also located in this district. The city is making public investments with a new parking lot across from the Municipal Facilities Building and beginning construction of the Electric Building and new Technical Services Building. The Bentonville Public Library will begin construction in 2006 at the old post office location in the Central Commercial District.

**Parks and Trails**

There are five parks totaling 7.78 acres within the downtown area: Square Park, Dave Peel Park, Train Station Park, “F” Street Park, and Town Branch Park. All of the parks downtown are mini parks with limited facilities, but Dave Peel Park includes restrooms and playground equipment.

There is one existing trail and several planned trails for downtown. Town Branch Trail begins at Dave Peel Park and travels eastward along the south side of Central Ave, turning south at Town Branch Park. This trail goes through the industrial area along SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street and will eventually be connected to Northwest Arkansas Community College.

The Trailblazers and the City are working to develop plans to link the downtown square to the Bentonville/Bella Vista Trail. This trail will link central Bentonville with Bella Vista to the north of the city. The Heritage Trail, recognized by the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission and shown on the Master Street Plan, identifies a historic trail along Central Avenue from Walton Blvd to the Square. A partnership between the Trailblazers, Main Street Bentonville and the City is working toward a downtown trail that will provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Wal-Mart General Office and the Square District.

**Promotions and Activities**

Promotions and activities have increased over the last five years with assistance from Main Street Bentonville and the Bentonville A & P Commission. The quality of the farmer’s market has improved with structure and leadership. Holiday events have been greatly expanded with a growing parade and for the first time in 2003 a free ice skating rink in the Harp’s parking lot brought hundreds of people to central Bentonville. Also new in 2003 was the Art Walk, which will become an annual event. Here are some of the special events that take place downtown:

- Farmers Market (May – Oct.)
- Pops in the Park
- Pickin’ on the Square (May – Oct.)
- Halloween Boo Bash
- Winter Wonderland events (Dec.)
- Art Walk
- Fourth of July Events (July)
- Open houses with downtown merchants

## Transportation and Circulation

### Transportation Corridors

There are three major transportation corridors that traverse through the downtown.

- **Central Ave.** runs east-west from I-540 through the square to Walton Boulevard. It is a two-lane road with a mixture of curb and gutter and ditches. It is classified as a major arterial on the Master Street Plan.
- **A St.** runs north-south from N. Walton Blvd. to SE 14<sup>th</sup> St. It is a two-lane road with a mixture of curb and gutter and ditches. It is classified as a minor arterial on the Master Street Plan.
- **8<sup>th</sup> St.** runs east-west from I-Street to Moberly Ln. It is a two-lane road with no curb and gutter. It is classified as a minor arterial on the Master Street Plan.

### Circulation around the Square

The current traffic pattern around the square is two-way traffic on Central Ave., one-way traffic on SE A St, two-way traffic on NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St, and one-way traffic on SE Main St. There is a traffic light at Central and A St. and a stop sign at Central and Main.

### Pedestrian Facilities

The square has sidewalks, but sidewalks throughout the rest of the downtown area are often incomplete or in disrepair. City staff conducted a sidewalk inventory in October 2004 for two census block groups in the downtown area. A map is provided in Appendix D showing existing and non-existing sidewalks.

### Parking Facilities

Within the downtown square area, parking consists of two-hour on street parallel parking, unlimited free parking lots and private parking lots. There are 422 parking spaces in nine free parking lots. There are eight private parking lots. See Appendix E for a map of existing parking lots.



Farmer's Market



Pickin' on the Square