

Downtown Master Plan

Downtown Market Findings January 13, 2010

Participant Survey Results

Approximately 350 people in attendance
131 Surveys completed
96 Zip codes collected

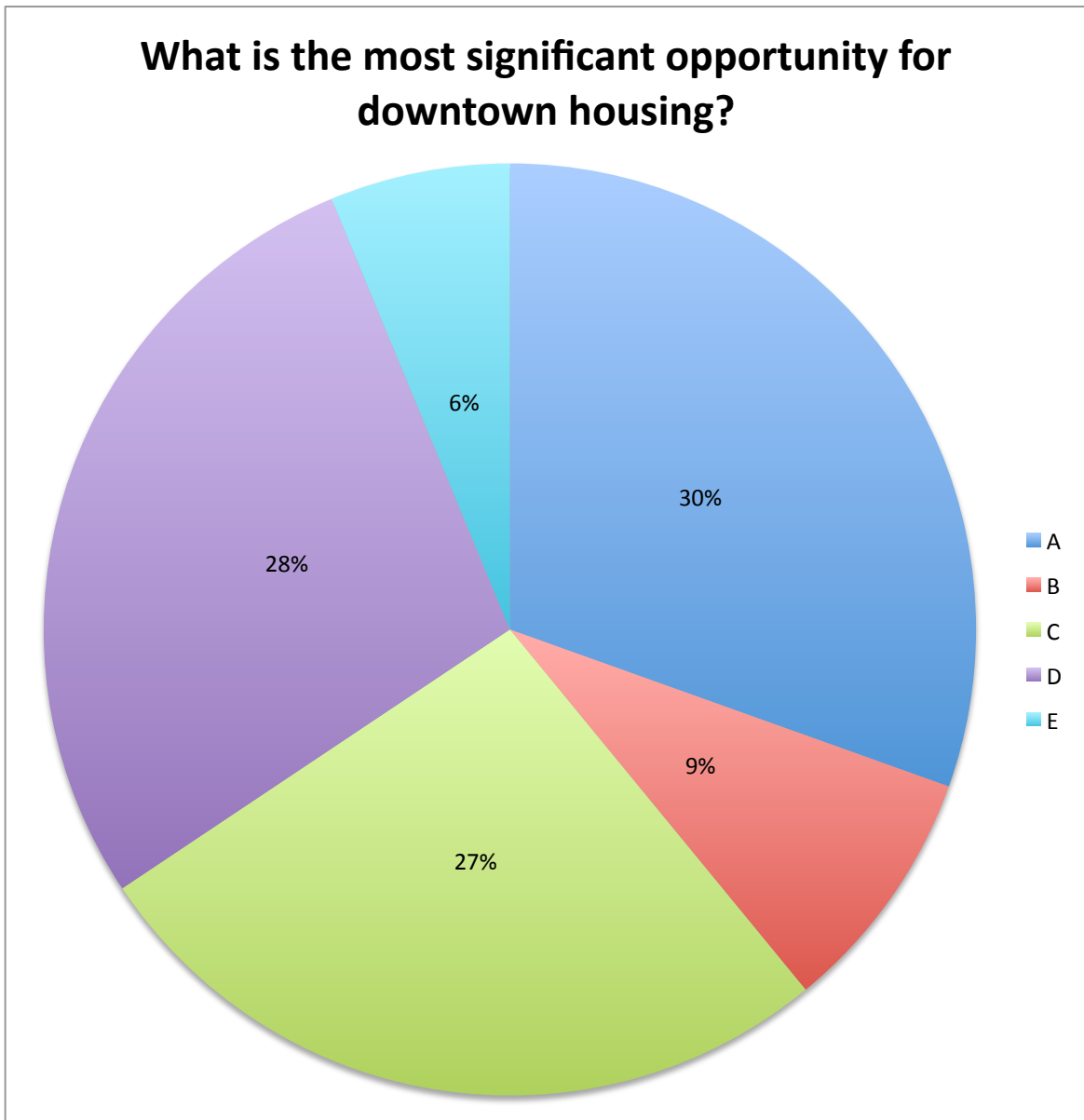
DISCOVERIES



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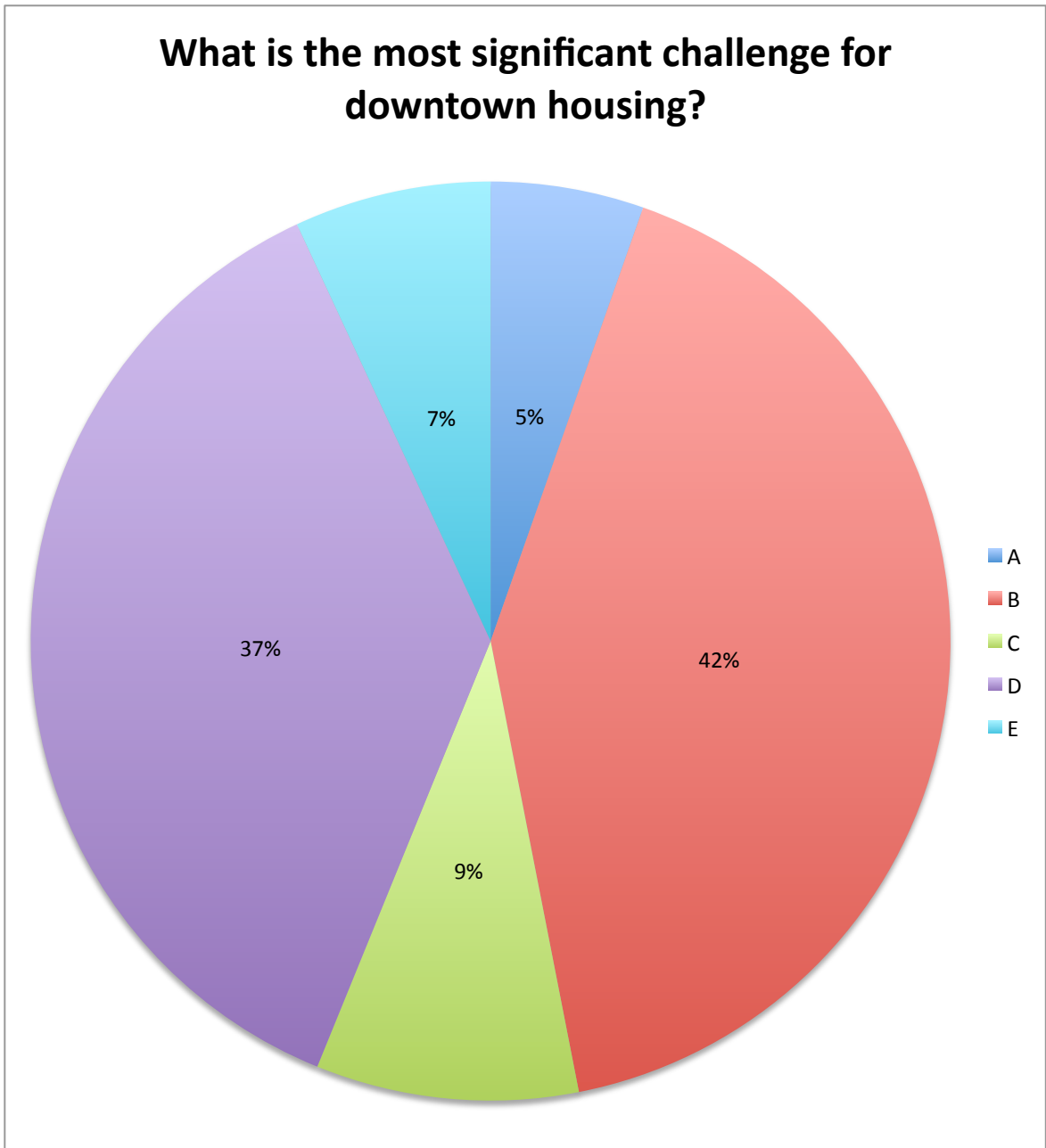
What is the most significant opportunity for downtown housing?

	#	%
A Attract the creative and next generation workforce Wichita's business need	39	30%
B Create housing along the Arkansas River to make it more vibrant	11	8%
C Create demand for more and better downtown retail/dining/entertainment	34	26%
D Satisfy unmet regional demand for more varied housing options in walkable settings	36	27%
E Other	8	6%



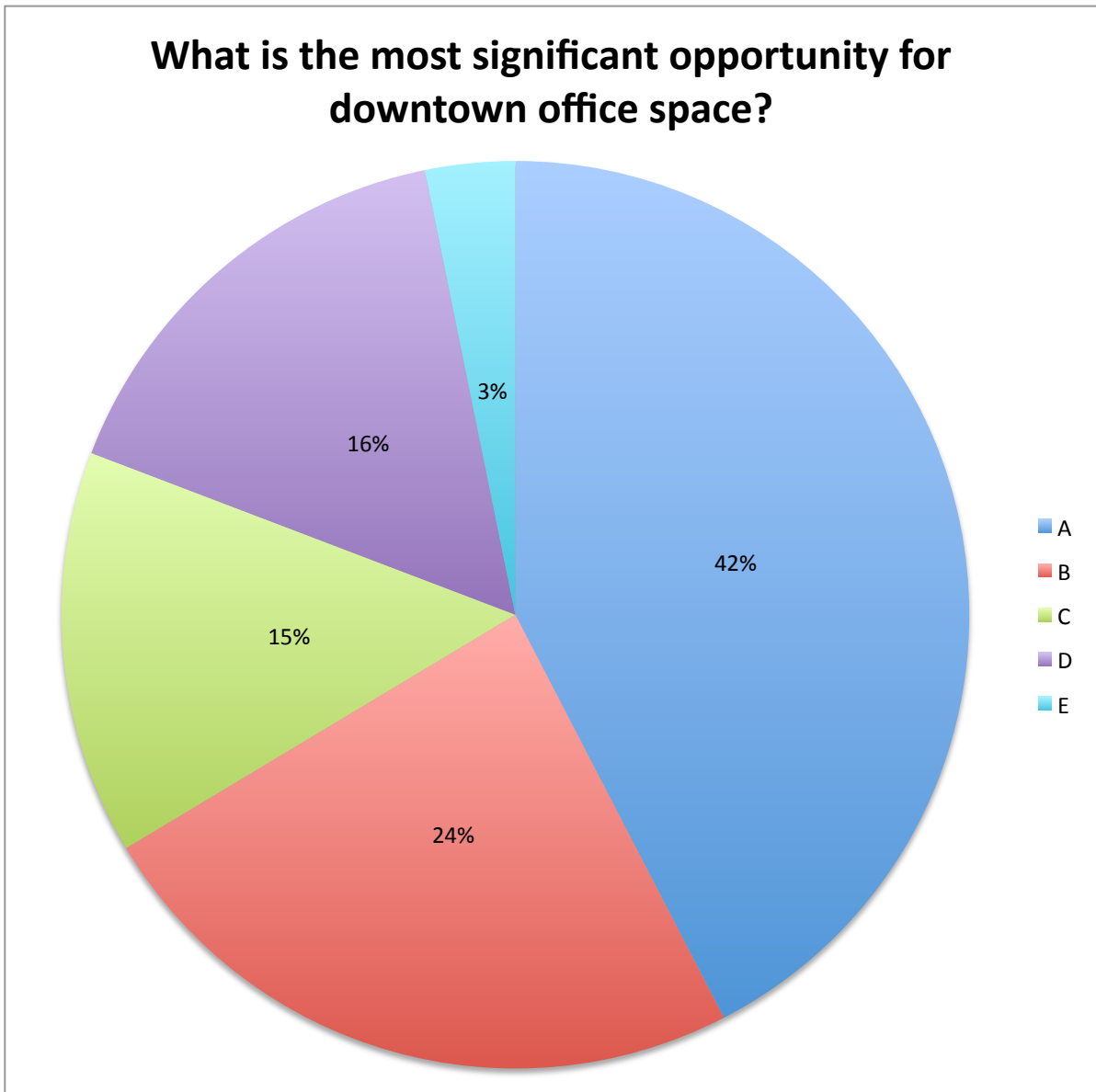
What is the most significant challenge for downtown housing?

	#	%
A Too few people are interested in living downtown	7	5%
B Building new housing at a price the market can afford	54	42%
C Finding/assembling appropriate development sites	12	9%
D Creating more retail, parks and/or other residential amenities	48	37%
E Other	9	7%



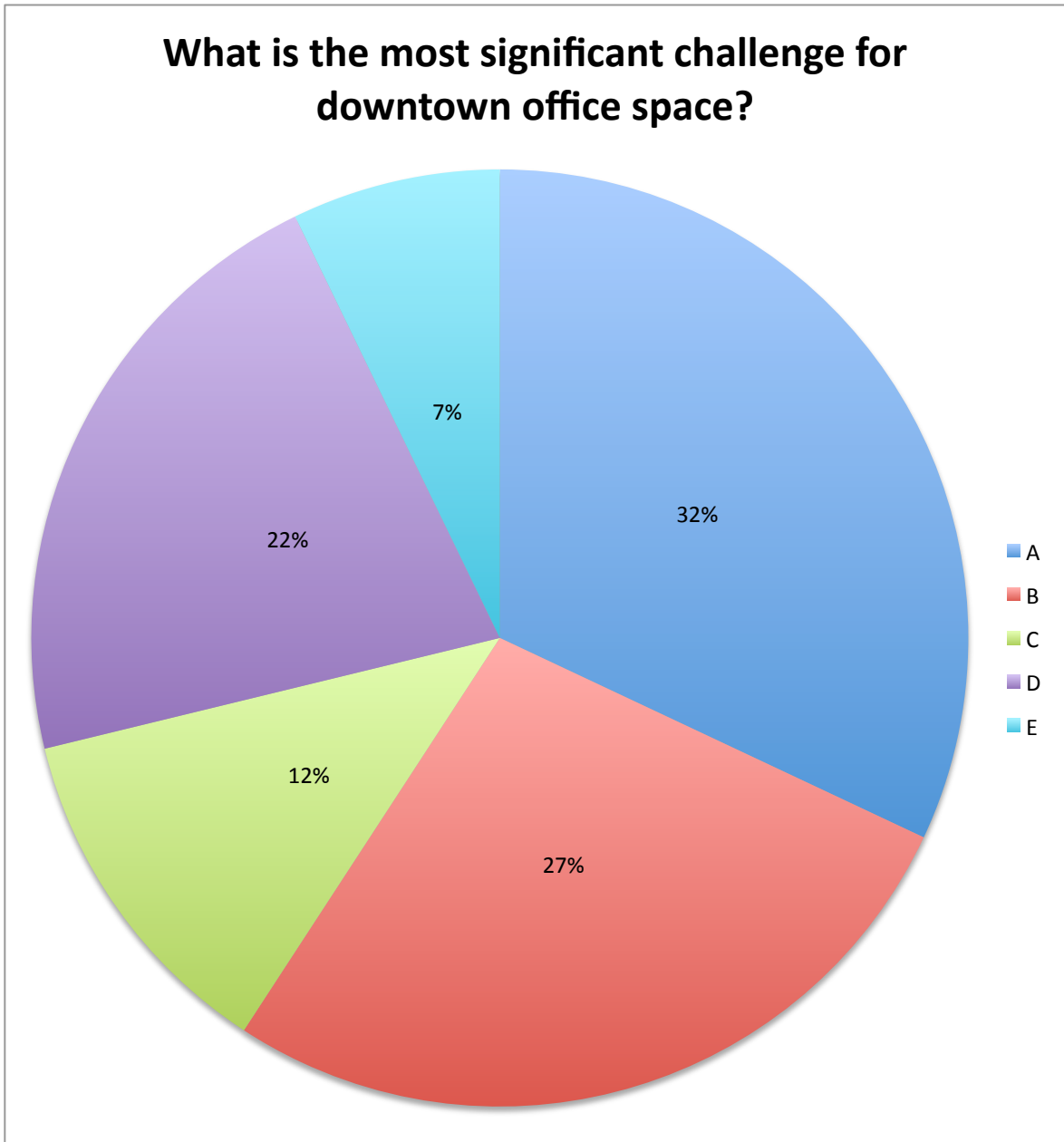
What is the most significant opportunity for downtown office space:

	#	%
A Provide a preferred working environment for the creative and next-generation workforce, attracting talent and investment to grow the regional economy	53	42%
B Increase downtown employment to make downtown more vibrant	30	24%
C Expand demand for more and better downtown retail/dining/entertainment	18	15%
D Enable existing downtown businesses to grow and enjoy improved setting/amenities	20	16%
E Other	4	3%



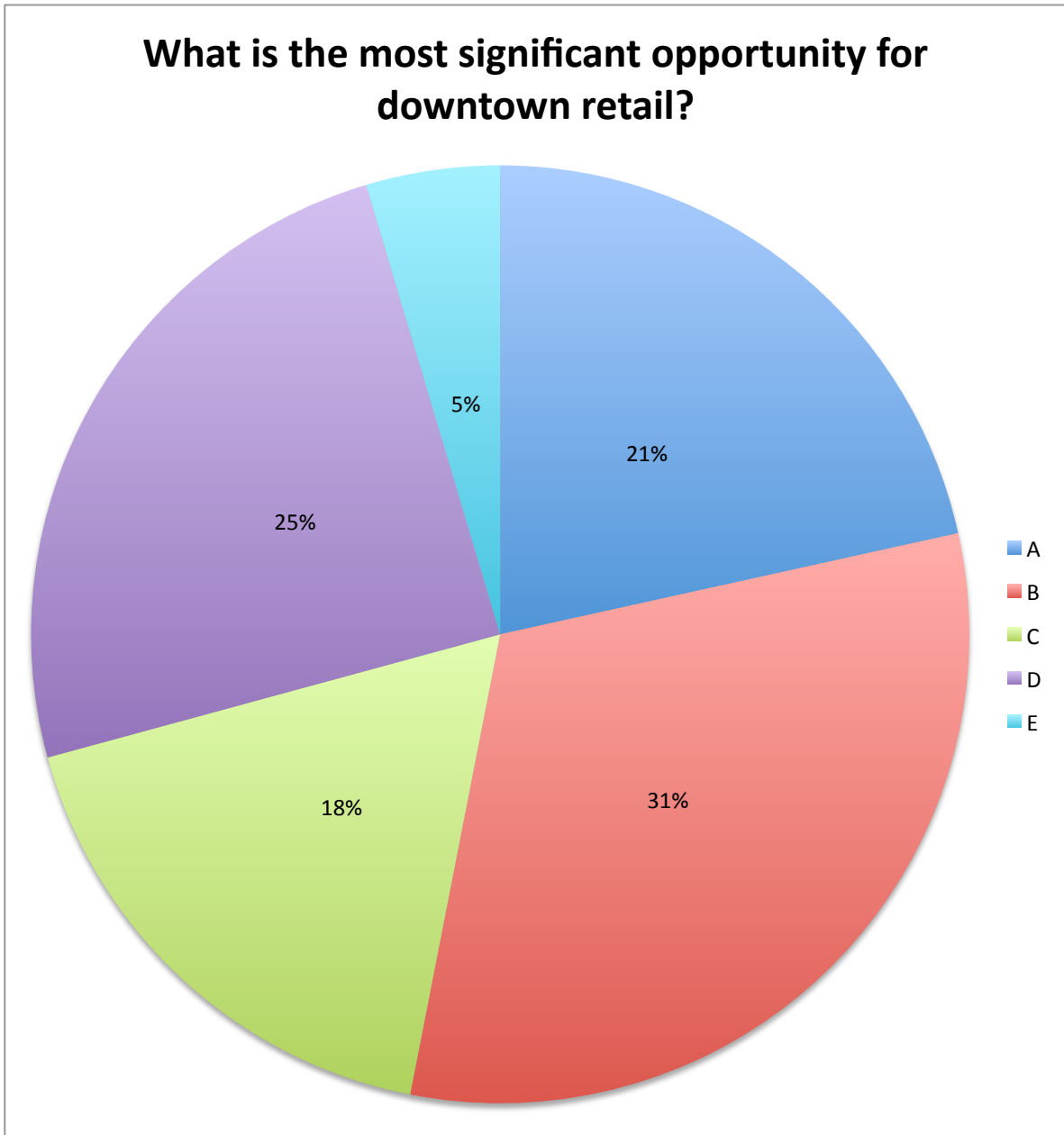
What is the most significant challenge for downtown office space?

	#	%
A Making downtown a desirable business address	40	32%
B Buliding or renovating quality office space at a price the market can afford	34	27%
C Finding/assembling appropriate development sites	15	12%
D Creating more retail or other amenities to improve the working environment	27	22%
E Other	9	7%



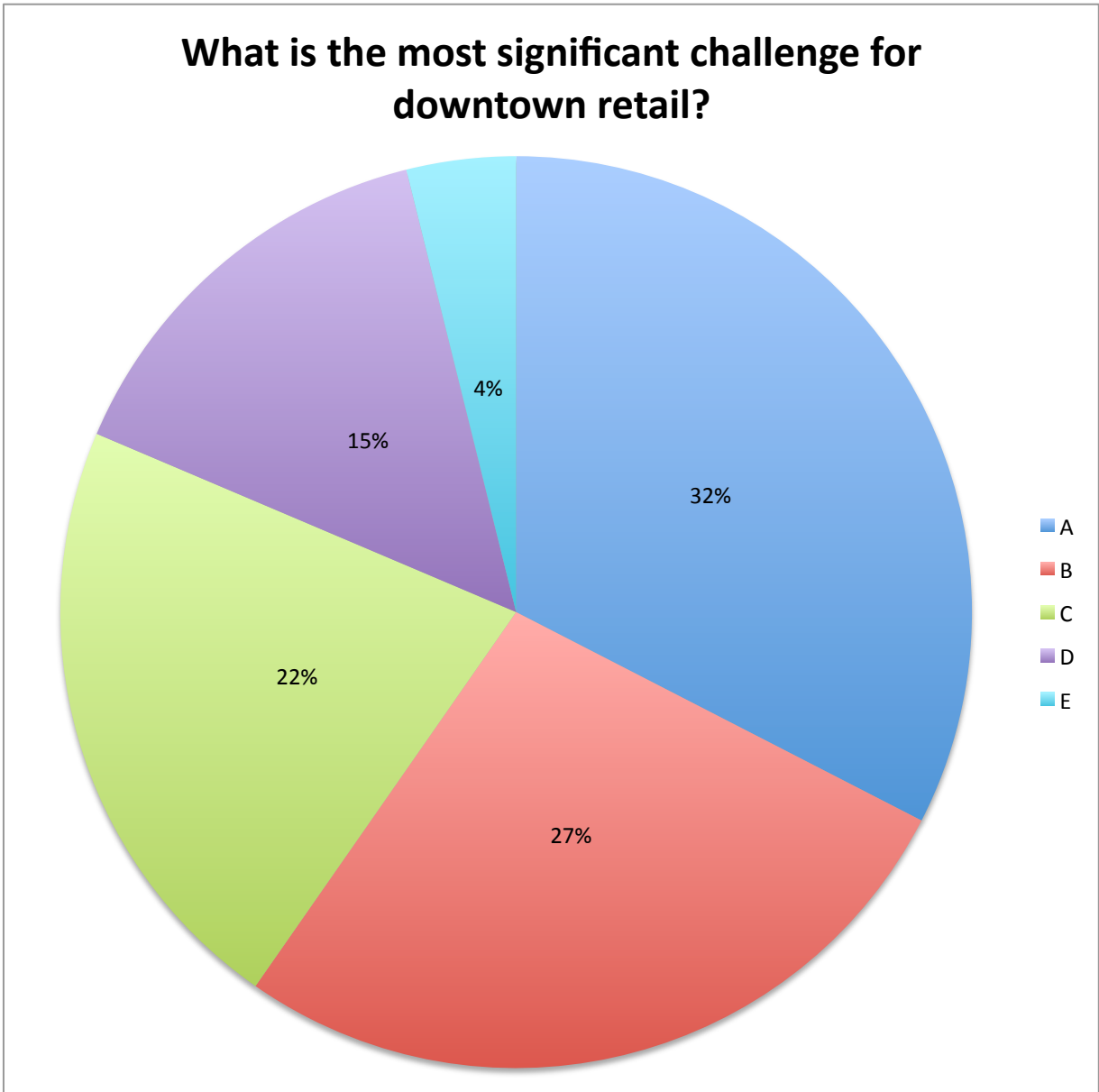
What is the most significant opportunity for downtown retail?

	#	%
A Create destination retail serving the whole region	28	21%
B Satisfy unmet demand in the Wichita region for retail options in walkable settings	41	31%
C Attract more housing and/or businesses downtown	23	18%
D Make downtown streets more interesting, vibrant and safe	32	25%
E Other	6	5%



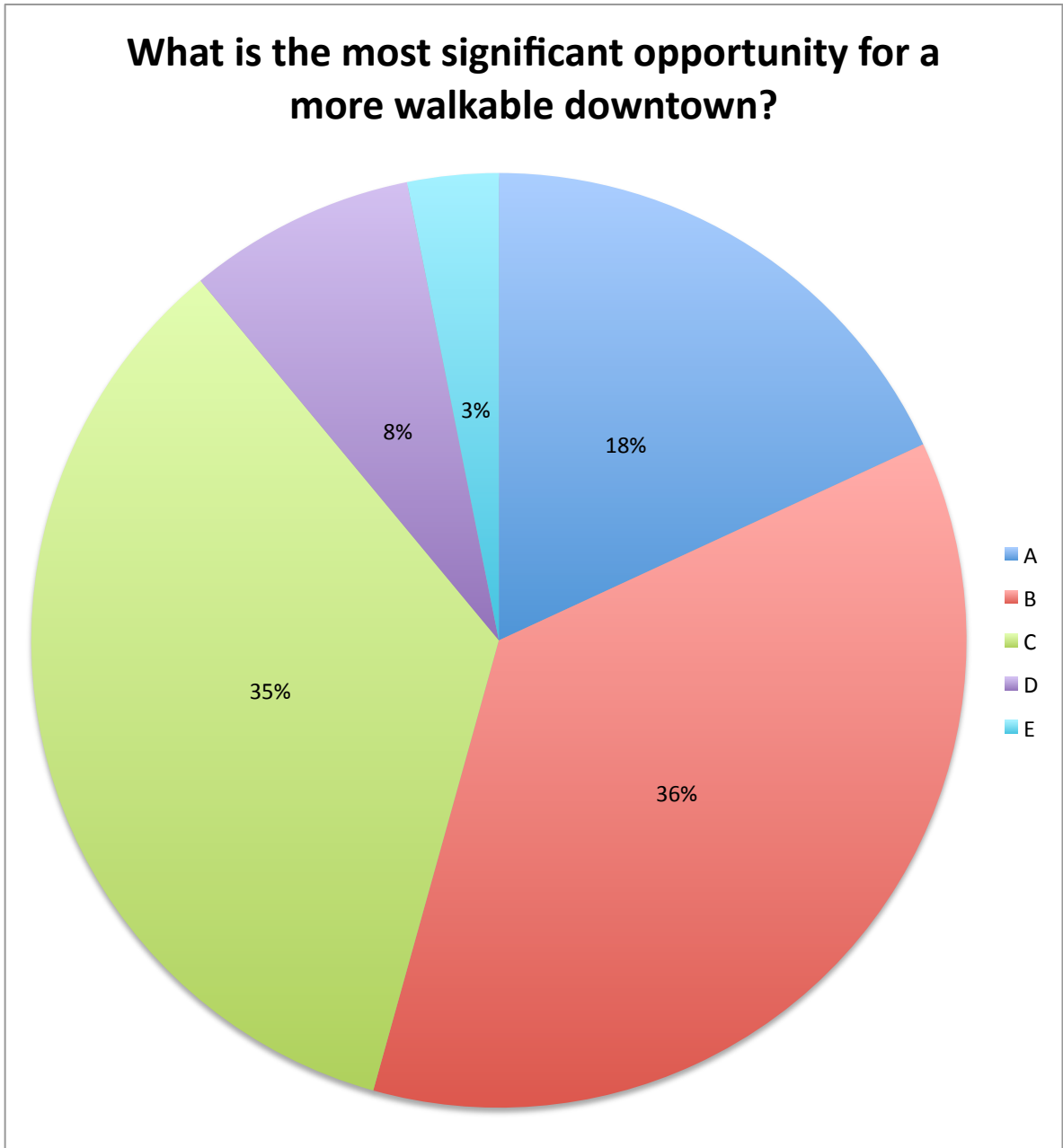
What is the most significant challenge for downtown retail?

	#	%
A Attracting people from the whole region to support downtown retail	42	32%
B Adding downtown workers and residents to support downtown retail	35	27%
C building or renovating quality retail space at a price the market can afford	28	22%
D improving transportation and parking	19	15%
E Other	5	4%



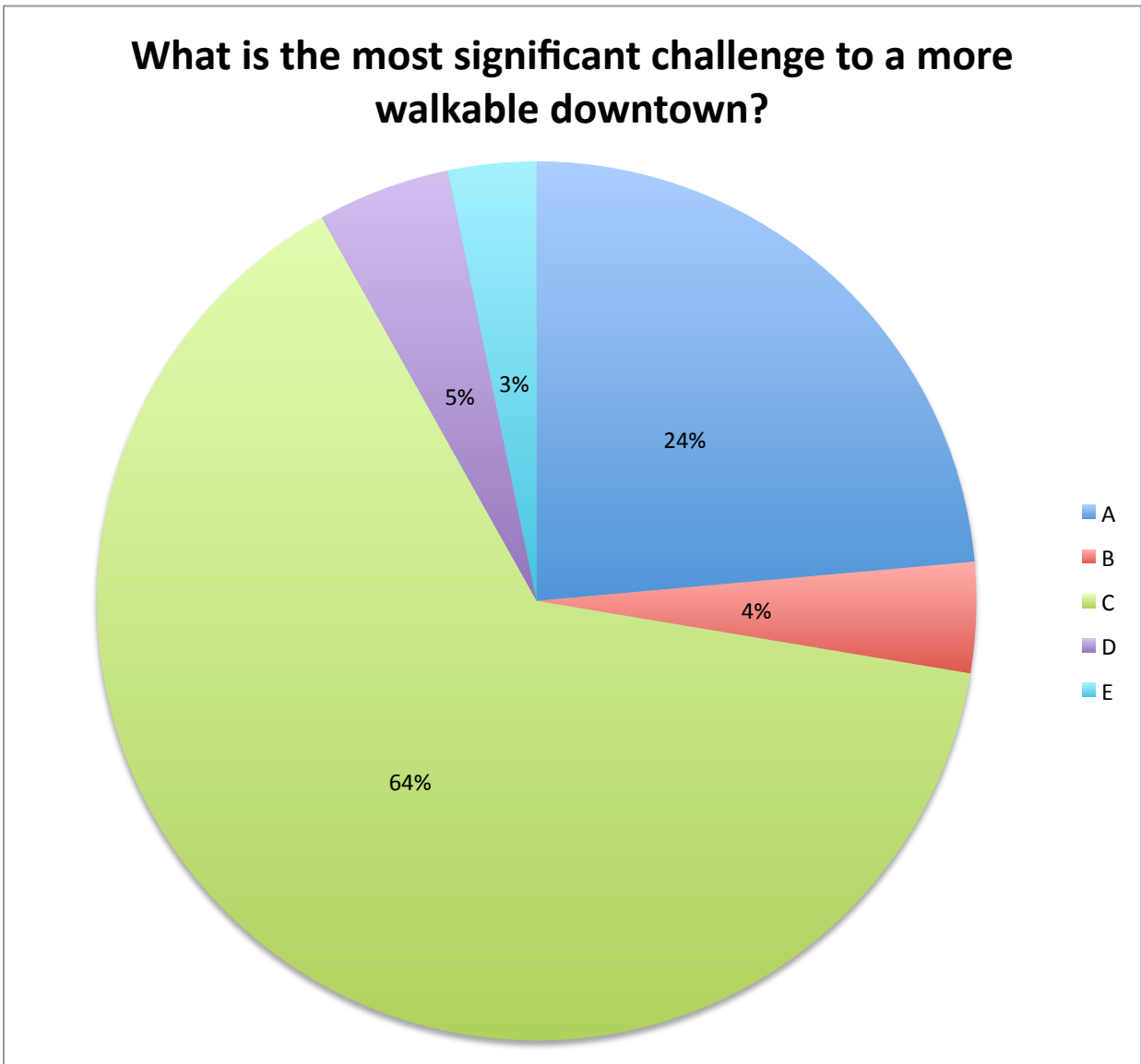
What is the most significant opportunity for a more walkable downtown?

	#	%
A Attract more housing and/or businesses downtown	23	18%
B Satisfy unmet demand in the Wichita region for living, working and/or shopping options in walkable settings	46	36%
C Make downtown streets more interesting and vibrant	44	35%
D Increase public safety by calming traffic and putting more "eyes on the street"	10	8%
E Other	4	3%



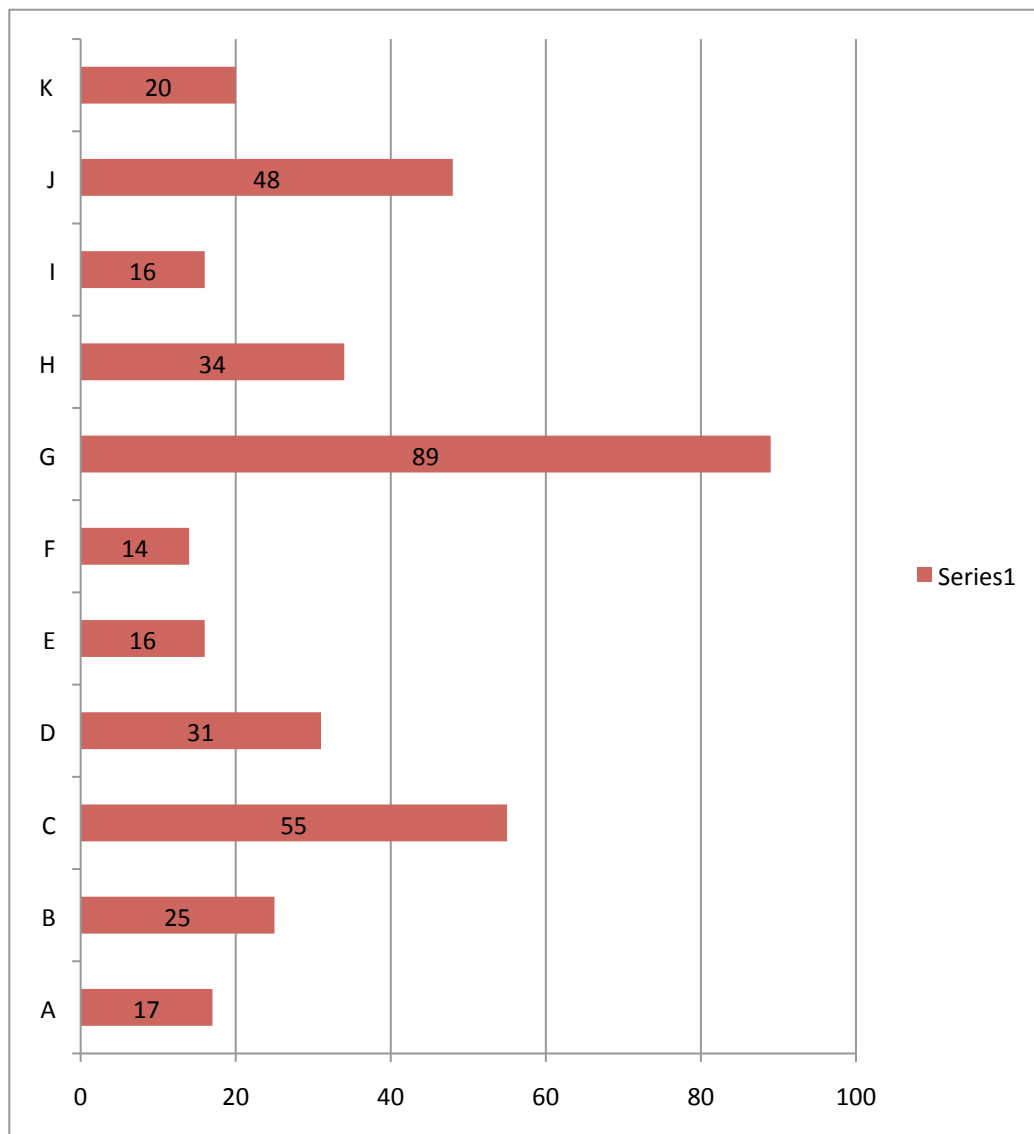
What is the most significant challenge to a more walkable downtown?

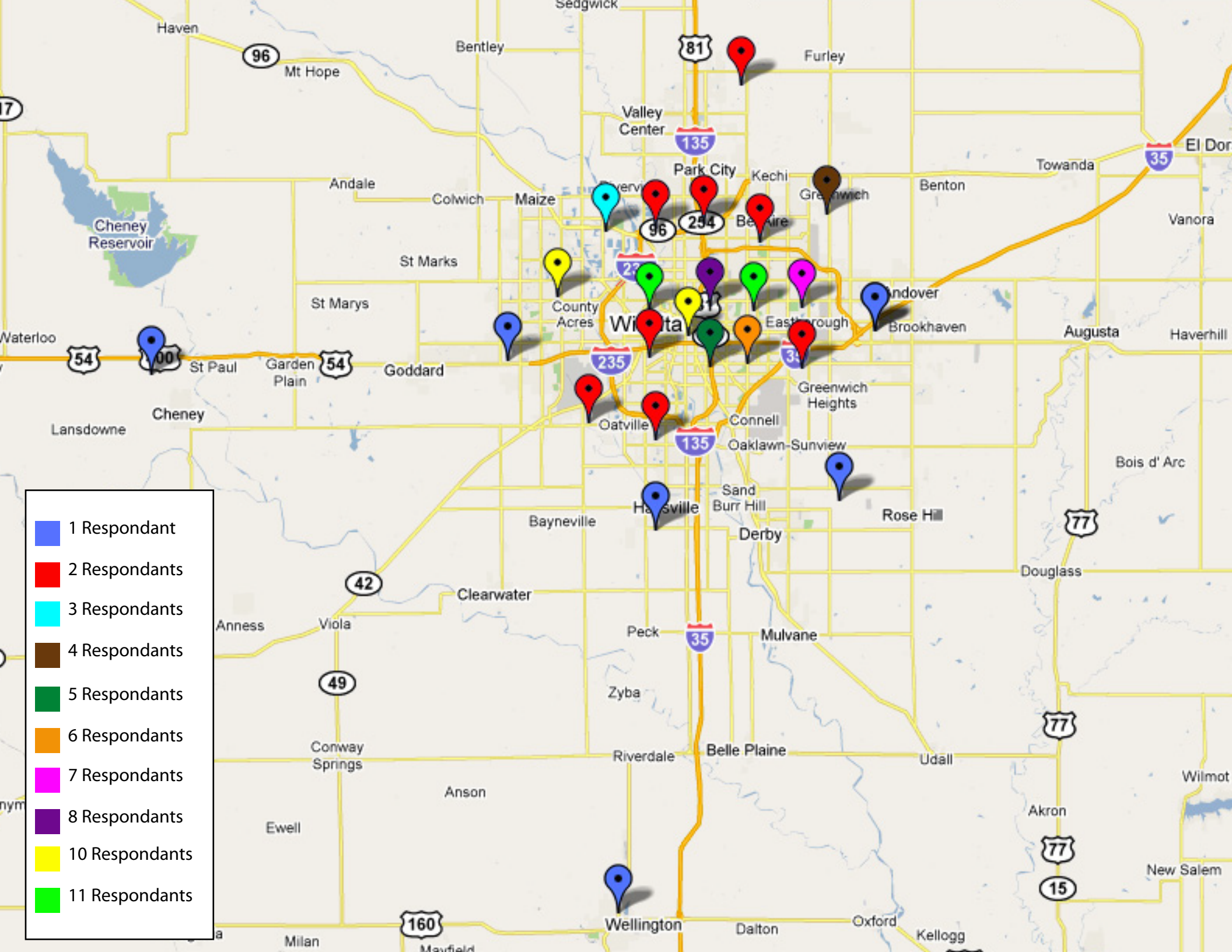
	#	%
A Attracting people from the whole region to walk downtown for shopping, dining, and entertainment	29	24%
B Taming traffic to make walking across/along streets safe and more pleasant	5	4%
C Replacing blank walls, parking structures, parking lots and other sites that detract from the walking experience with interesting ground-floor retail or other active uses, and pedestrian-scaled architecture	79	64%
D Addressing panhandling and/or homelessness	6	5%
E Other	4	3%



What THREE streetscape improvements would most effectively improve walkability and transportation options in downtown?

A	Bulb-outs	17
B	Medians with pedestrian breaks	25
C	On-street bicycle lanes/cycle tracks	55
D	High-visibility crosswalks	31
E	Bus turnouts	16
F	Bike racks/lockers	14
G	Street amenities	89
H	Improved street lighting	34
I	On-street parking	16
J	Pedestrian wayfinding	48
K	Other	20





Thursday, Jan. 14, 2010

Consultant: Downtown needs hotel, office space

BY RICK PLUMLEE
The Wichita Eagle

Housing isn't the only market not being met by Wichita's downtown.

Hotel rooms and office space also are in short supply, say consultants helping the city develop a revitalization master plan for downtown.

Consultant Sarah Woodworth found 73 percent of Wichita's hotel market share comes from those visiting downtown for business or convention reasons, but downtown hotels have only 12 percent of the total rooms in the city.

The news on office space doesn't come as a surprise to some, considering the last office building to go up downtown was in 1987.

More than 300 people turned out to hear Goody Clancy, a Boston-based consulting firm, present its initial findings Wednesday evening at the Wichita Scottish Rite Masonic Center. Local panelists also commented on the consultants' observations and information.

The broad view of the plan is to develop a collection of mixed-use neighborhoods for housing, office space, retail and hotel.

The information on hotel rooms comes two days after the Wichita City Council decided to postpone action for three weeks on a letter of intent to help fund a Marriott Hotel at WaterWalk, which would be downtown at Main and Dewey. Plans for that hotel call for 130 rooms.

Downtown's existing six hotels provide about 1,000 rooms.

Woodworth said her findings were still in the observation stage, so she wasn't prepared to say how many more hotel rooms the downtown market needed.

But she did provide an overview of the market that strongly hinted at the needs.

The most compelling fact was the vast difference between business-related visitors downtown and downtown's small slice of the city's hotel rooms, she said.

Woodworth said she first thought that maybe downtown hotels were doing poorly, but she found that the four downtown hotels north of Kellogg have an occupancy rate of almost 70 percent.

"The rule of thumb is that when you hit 65 percent," Woodworth said, "you're probably ready for new rooms.

"Our preliminary observation is there's a market for additional hotel rooms downtown."

Woodworth also had some observations on office space downtown.

Given downtown hasn't seen a new office building in nearly a quarter of a century, Wichita is short on Class A — or high-end, state-of-the-art technologically — office space. There's only a 5 percent vacancy for such space.

"If larger firms want to come to downtown," Woodworth said, "we can't provide a product."

Such little high-end office space means downtown also runs the risk of losing existing tenants because they can't expand to incorporate the latest in technology.

Woodworth said projected job growth in Sedgwick County shows that office-based industries are expected to jump from about 45,000 jobs in 2010 to 52,000 by 2020.

Two panelists, commercial Realtors Patrick Ahearn and Marlin Penner, said parking is a significant factor in attracting and keeping tenants.

Woodworth agreed, but said it was important to think about parking strategically.

"The challenge is how to have it as a shared usage," she said. "It should be handled on a building-by-building basis.

"Otherwise, we'll create a suburban product in an urban setting."

Valerie Reimers, a panelist and owner of LuCinda's in Old Town, appreciated that consultant Michael Berne said it was important to build upon the existing unique shops.

"I hope we keep downtown unique and not mass market," she said.

Consultant Laurie Volk said she found the downtown market could support 1,000 new households over the next five to seven years.

That translates to about 1,500 residents. That would double to about 3,000 people over that timeframe.

"We recommend that you build on what you already have here in Old Town," she said. "If not for the recession, you could likely do more."

About 50 percent of the households projected to want to live downtown would also want to rent.

"Rentals are the key to getting downtown going," Volk said.

Volk said the market would handle lofts or apartments selling from \$150,000 to \$400,000. The rent range would be \$400 to \$2,100.

Because most of those wanting to live downtown are 35 or younger and most of the households would have one or two people, small units would be in highest demand.

"People will live in a small unit in an urban environment because they're not relying on their apartment to provide everything," Volk said. "The downtown concept is outside your living room."

"We're competing for employees with Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Denver," said Sam Williams, a panelist and managing partner for the advertising firm Sullivan, Higdon and Sink. "They can get a much better living experience downtown there than they can here.

"Right now, we're still in the mode of selling Wichita rather than them coming to us."

The next public step is a meeting Feb. 25 at the Scottish Rite auditorium, when urban researcher Jim Cloar will talk about taking a master plan from a vision to reality. Goody Clancy will present more of its research during a workshop session Feb. 27 at the Wichita Art Museum.

Reach Rick Plumlee at 316-268-6660 or rplumlee@wichitaeagle.com.

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Posted on Tue, Jan. 12, 2010

Firm: Downtown needs housing

RICK PLUMLEE
The Wichita Eagle

Wichita's downtown has the market to support 1,000 new households over the next five to seven years.

That's one piece of information that consultants will provide Wednesday night during a public meeting at the Wichita Scottish Rite Masonic Center, 332 E. First St. Goody Clancy, a Boston-based consulting firm hired by the city, will draw from four months of interviews and studies in presenting its market findings.

In addition to housing, consultants will also tell what they learned with regard to retail and other commercial markets, such as office space. Results of last month's "walk-shops" will also be discussed.

Local panelists will initiate discussion after each presentation, but the audience will have a chance to ask questions.

Laurie Volk, the consultant who is handling the research on the housing market, said Wichita's downtown can handle another 1,000 units over the next five to seven years. She said half of those would be rentals, 35 percent condominiums and the remaining 15 percent would be units such as townhouses.

Regardless of the mix, housing has to be there first to make revitalization work, the consultants said.

"Housing leads downtown markets these days," said David Dixon, a principal partner with Goody Clancy.

Before services?

"It's a chicken-and-egg thing," Dixon said. "In this case, the chicken comes first, then the services."

He said there are enough things downtown to attract residents.

"You have a job base, Old Town, the river," Dixon said. "All the downtown rental housing has a waiting list. There's not enough housing now to meet demand."

Volk, who runs her own New Jersey-based consulting firm, said that if the housing is there at the right price, there's a large pool of people who would be attracted to living downtown.

Nationally, 59 percent of households have one or two residents. Volk said research shows that in Wichita, 62.8 percent of households fit that category.

Downtown residential units typically are set up for two or fewer people.

Beyond that, Volk said her research shows 70 percent of Wichita's downtown housing market would be for those 35 and younger. That age group also makes up the second-largest in the country, she said.

She said those 35 and younger are also more inclined to live downtown.

"They prefer a neighborhood with more activity than a suburban neighborhood that's quiet at night," Volk said.

Considering those factors and others, Volk said, "It's clear there's a pretty good unpacked market for downtown."

The challenge for providing additional downtown housing is financing. With the recession, developers are finding bankers to be tight with loans.

"That's all cyclical," Dixon said. "A recession is temporary. Housing markets are being underbuilt."

To plan for the future based on what's happening now would be a mistake, he said.

"We've had real estate recessions every seven to 10 years," Dixon said. "They all look dire. And after every single one, the recovery has been faster than expected because of the need to catch up."

Reach Rick Plumlee at 316-268-6660 or rplumlee@wichitaeagle.com.