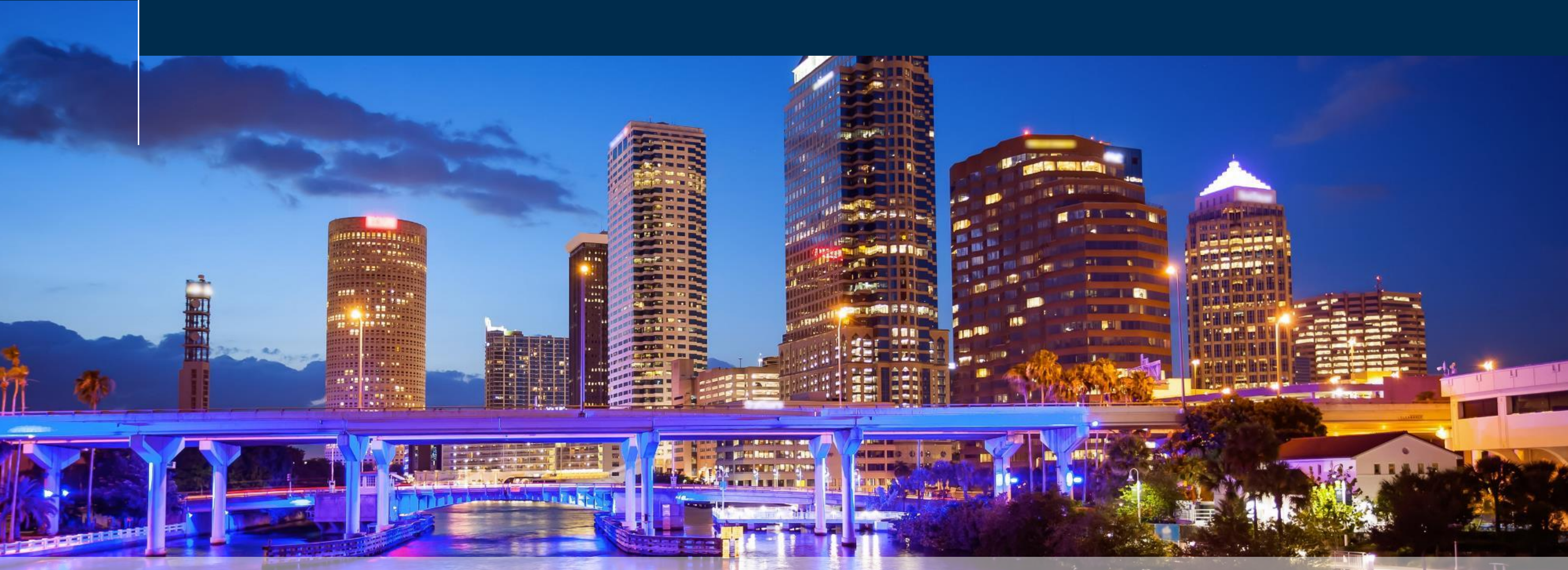


Understanding the future of downtowns

A data-driven perspective



Tracy Hadden Loh, Brookings Metro | @lohplaces 
Puget Sound Regional Council | September 29, 2023

BROOKINGS



Remote Work Is Costing Manhattan More Than \$12 Billion a Year

*Public Transit Officials Fear Virus
Could Send Systems Into 'Death
Spiral'*

**65% of Bay Area residents say fear of
crime keeps them from visiting big city
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upon us**

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back'**

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Headlines aren't
outcomes

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The future is a policy
question

*How a 'Golden Era for Large Cities'
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*Why Americans Are Leaving
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An aerial, high-angle photograph of a busy city street. A large group of pedestrians is crossing a wide crosswalk with white stripes. The people are in various poses, some walking, some standing, creating a sense of movement. The background shows more of the street and other pedestrians, slightly out of focus. The overall tone is bright and clear.

1

Why downtowns
should not be afraid
of other activity
centers – and vice
versa



2

Five reasons
everyone is wrong
about downtowns
and other activity
centers

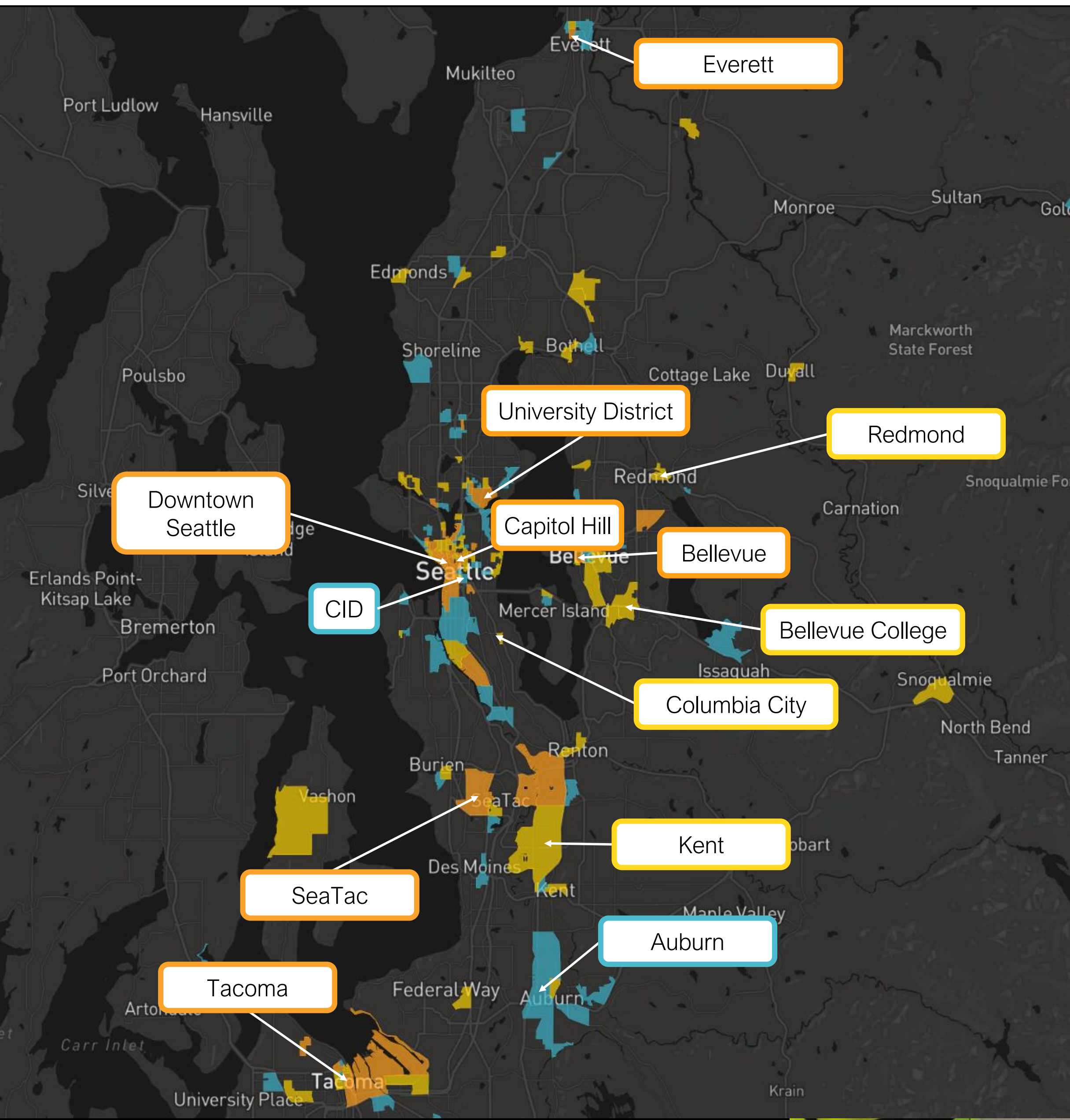
A new economic geography



Downtowns are not unique as regional centers of activity

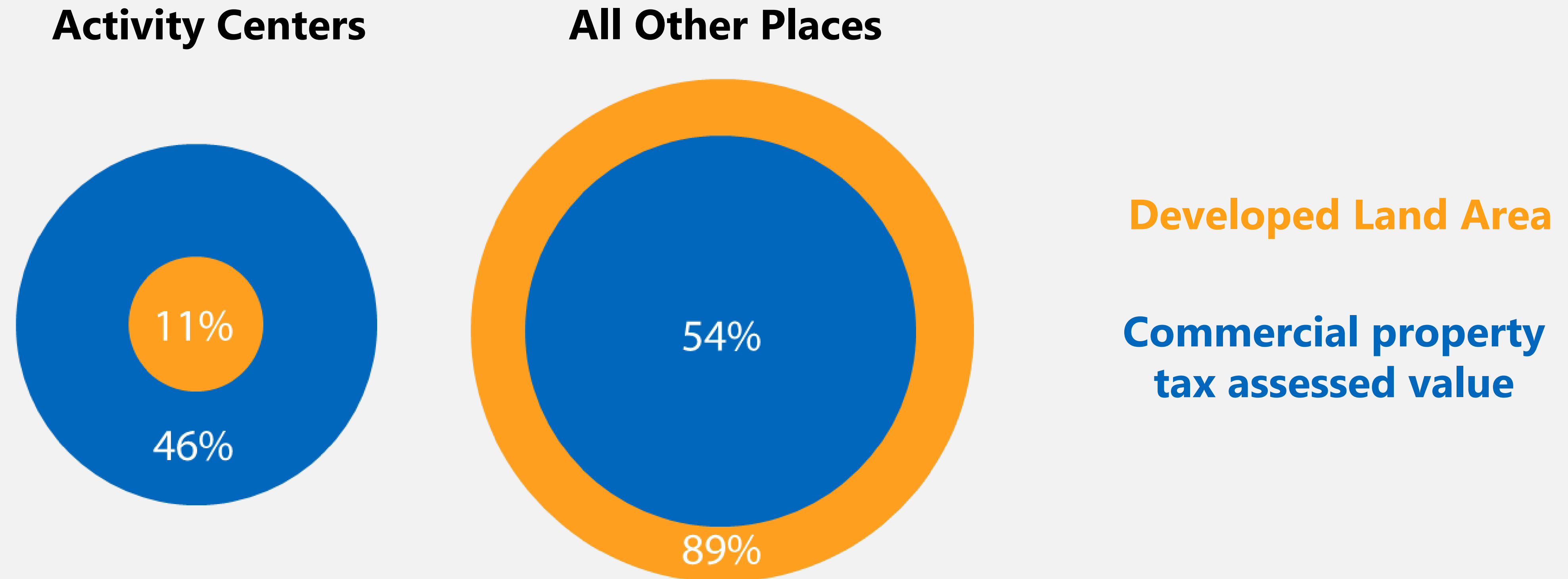
| | High Complexity | Low Complexity |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| High-scale concentration | <div><p>Primary Centers > 98th percentile in two asset types</p></div> | <div><p>Monocenters > 98th percentile in one asset type</p></div> |
| Low-scale concentration | <div><p>Secondary Centers ≥ 95th percentile in two asset types</p></div> | <div><p>Most Metropolitan Development</p></div> |

The Seattle metropolitan area's activity centers (according to “Brookings”)

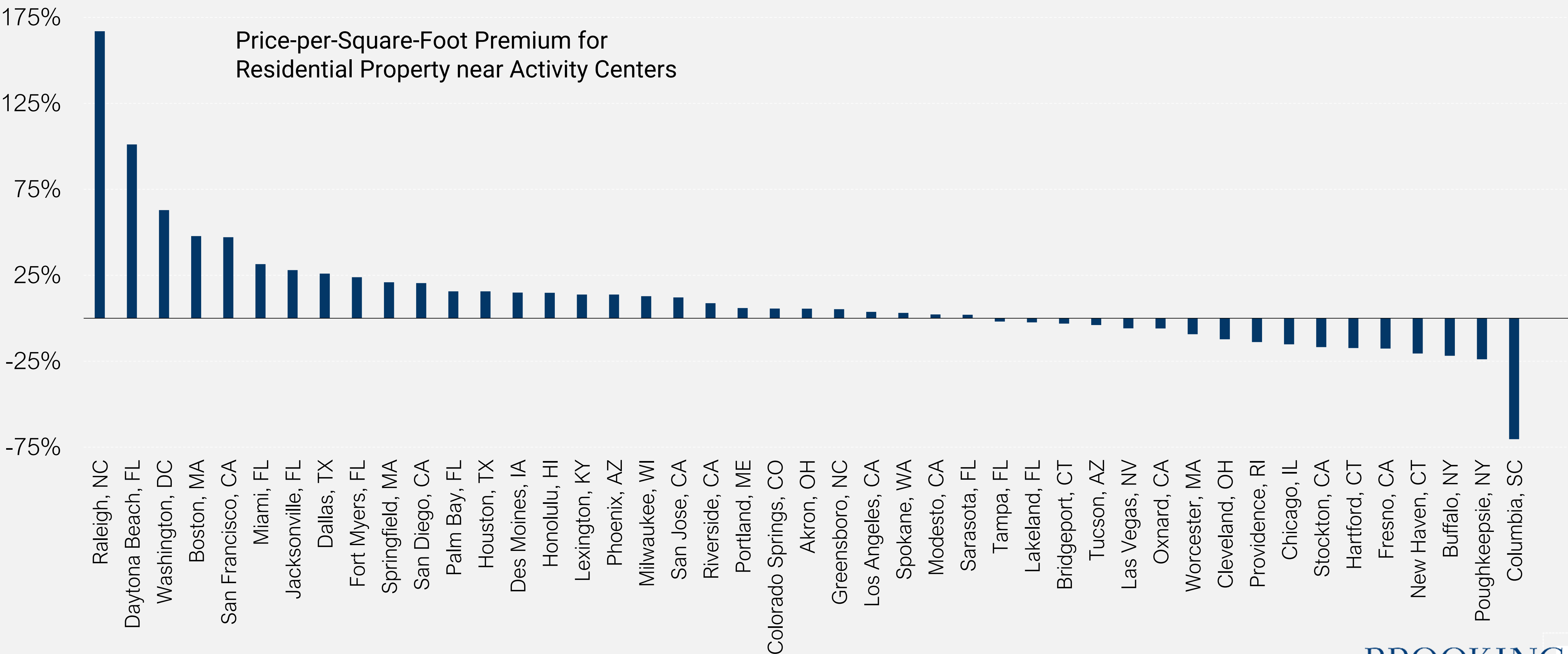


That doesn't mean it has to be "downtowns versus neighborhoods"

Activity centers produce outsized taxable value that can benefit the entire city



This is about downtowns and neighborhoods: a world in which everyone gets to live near jobs and other assets



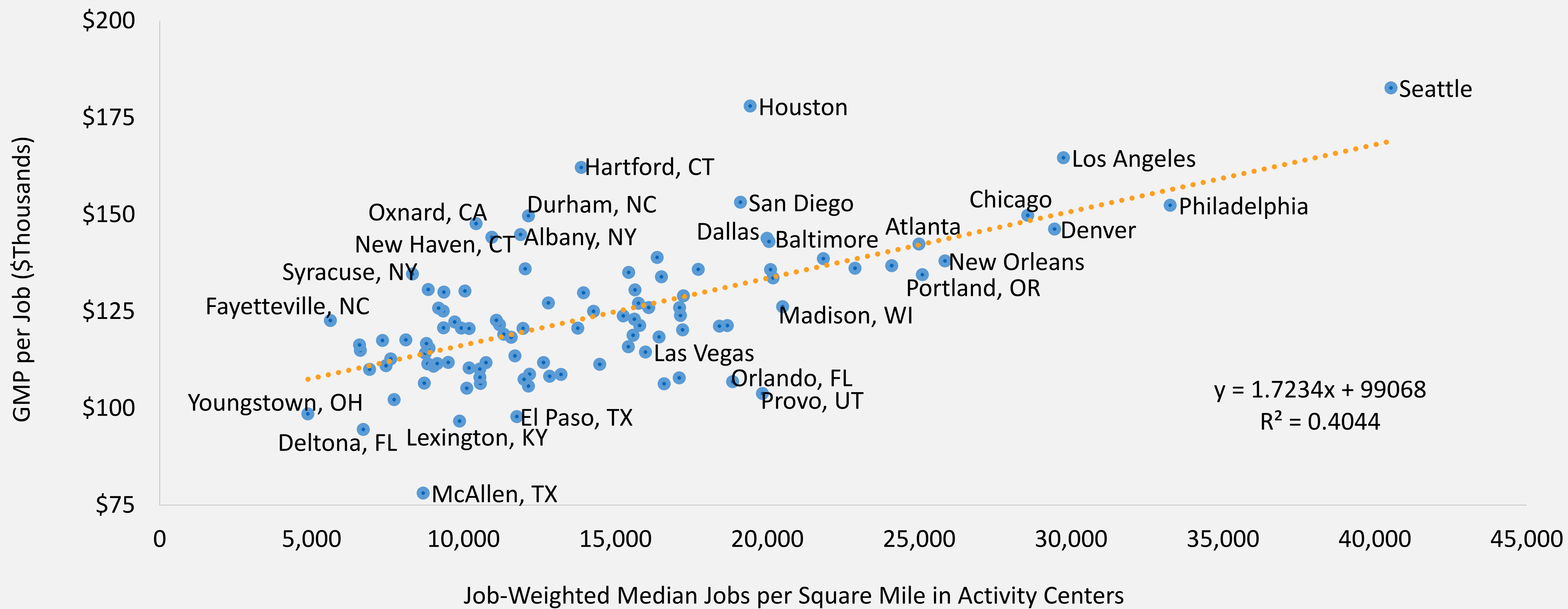
And housing near jobs is good for the environment too

| Metro Area | | Metro-Wide | Within 1 Mile of Activity Center | Within 1 Mile of Primary Center |
|------------|--|------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA | 48% | 68% | 86% |
| 2 | San Francisco-Oakland-Berkley, CA | 38% | 50% | 70% |
| 3 | Urban Honolulu, HI | 33% | 39% | 46% |
| 4 | Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV | 30% | 44% | 61% |
| 5 | Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH | 30% | 47% | 63% |
| 6 | Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA | 28% | 40% | 55% |
| 7 | Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI | 26% | 38% | 58% |
| 8 | Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA | 24% | 33% | 42% |
| 9 | Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD | 24% | 37% | 55% |
| 10 | Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT | 24% | 28% | 35% |

And jobs near jobs is good for the economy

Stronger activity centers are associated with higher productivity

US metro areas of > 500,000 residents*



* Excluding New York, Washington, Boston, San Francisco, San Jose (CA), Honolulu, and Bridgeport (CT).

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a busy city street. A large group of pedestrians is crossing a wide crosswalk with white stripes. The people are walking in various directions, some in groups, some alone. The scene is captured from a high vantage point, showing the density of the urban environment. The image is slightly faded, serving as a background for the text.

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#1: The need to understand adaptive reuse and resilience

Figure 1. Downtowns are characterized by office space

Real estate inventory product mix of the largest 30 U.S. metro areas, 2019



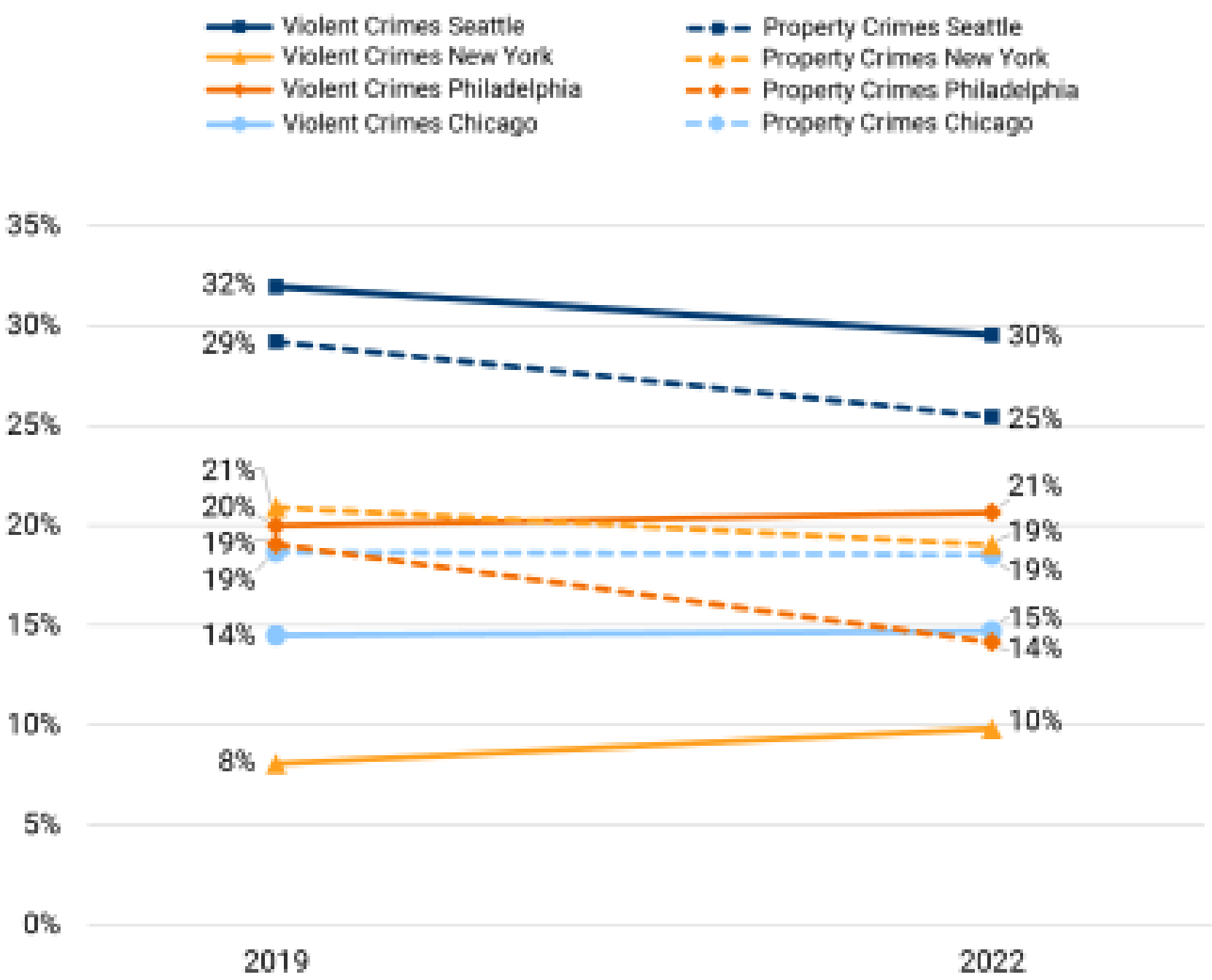
Source: Brookings analysis of CoStar data adapted from Loh and Leinberger, *Foot Traffic Ahead*, 2019.

Note: Analysis does not include hotels, industrial spaces, or owner-user space (for example, most museums and schools).

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

#2 - Crime: both perceptions and reality matter

FIGURE 3
Change in downtown share of crime, 4 cities
2019-2022



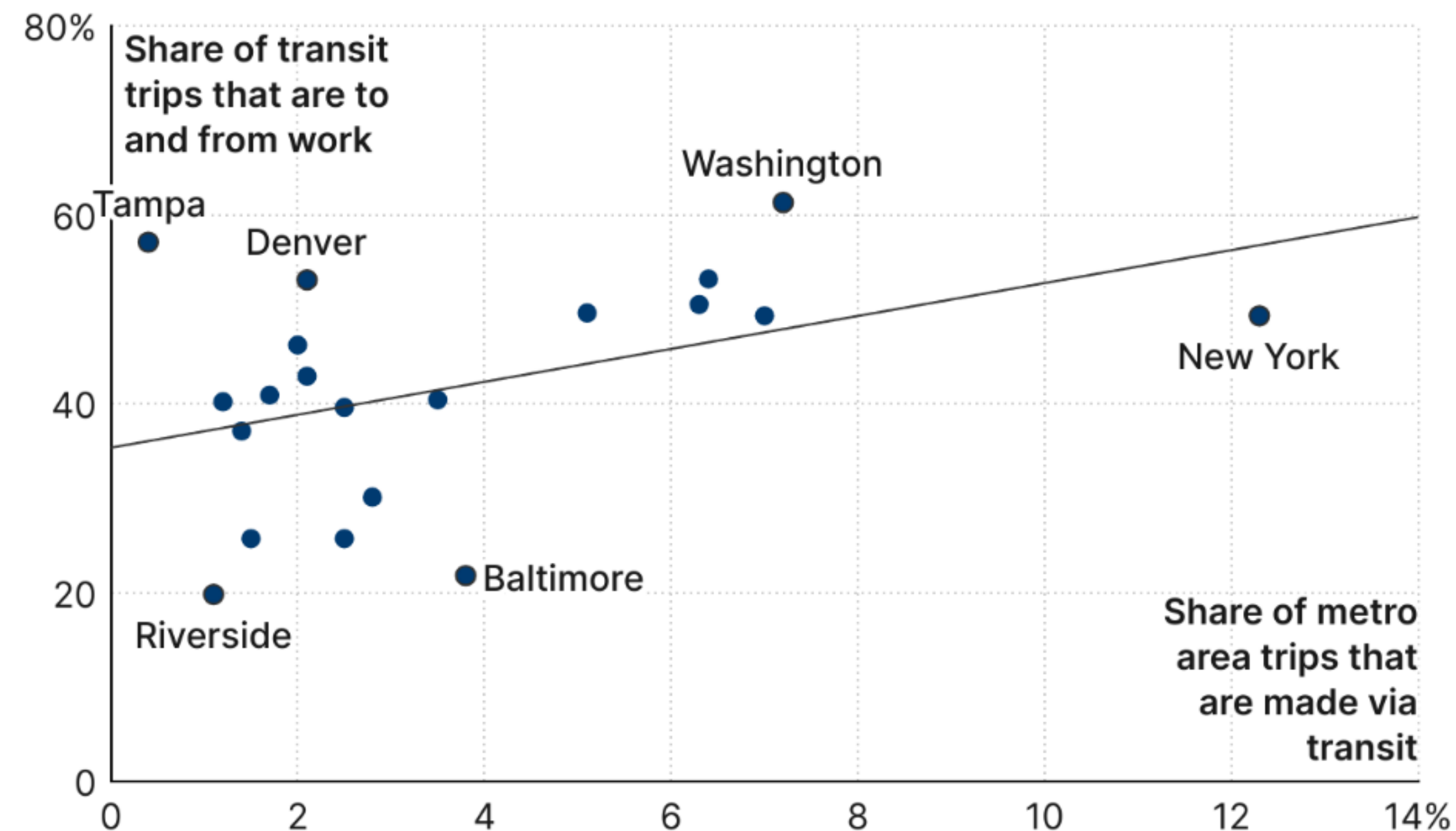
Source: Brookings analysis of city police department precinct-level data, 2019 - 2022.



#3 – The future of transit

Metro areas with high transit ridership had larger shares of transit trips to or from work pre-pandemic

20 largest US metro areas



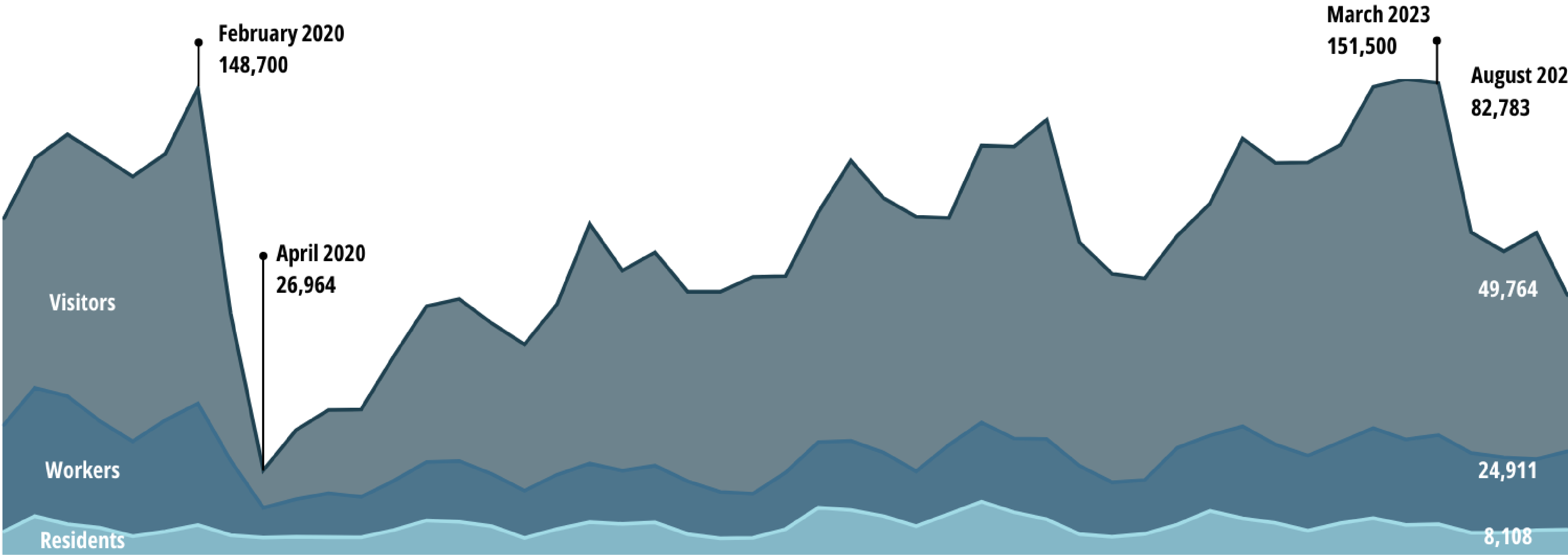
Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey

B | Brookings Metro

#4 – Hope for homelessness

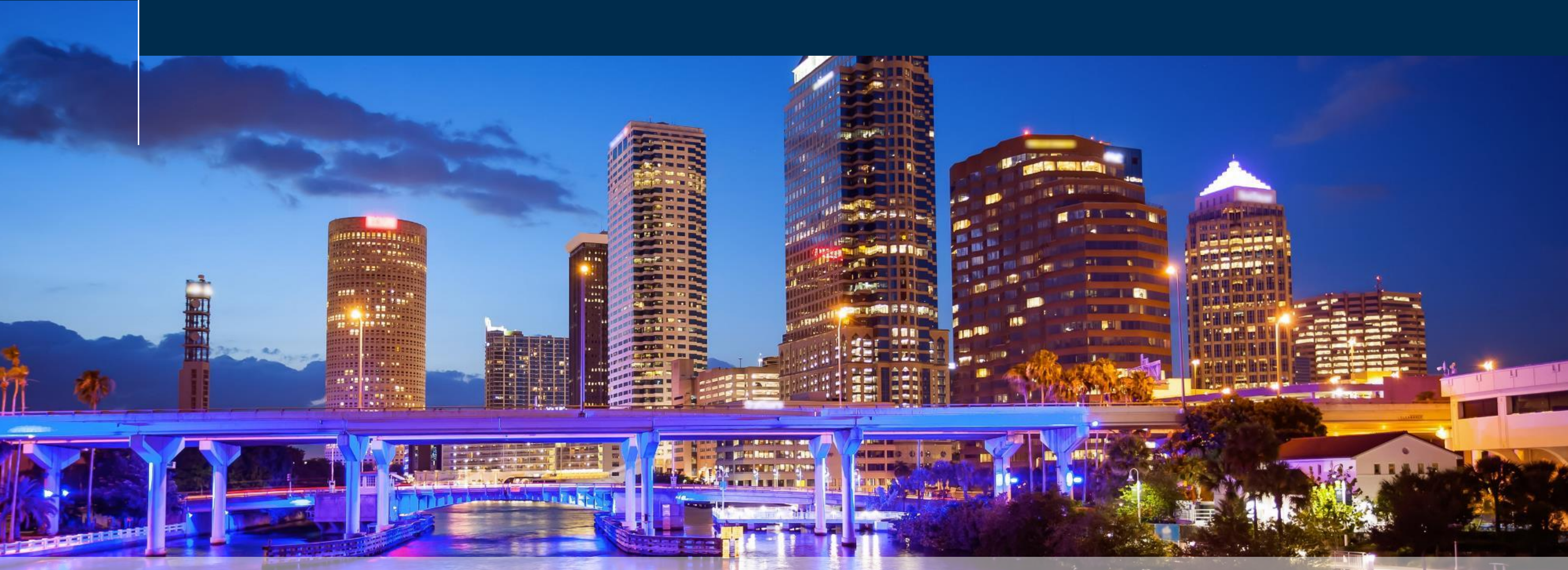
| Table 1: The prevalence of homelessness varies widely among major cities | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Rank | HUD Continuum of Care | Homeless per 100K |
| 1 | San Francisco CoC | 951 |
| 2 | New York City CoC | 730 |
| 3 | Long Beach CoC | 723 |
| 4 | Boston CoC | 678 |
| 5 | Los Angeles City & County CoC | 662 |
| 6 | District of Columbia CoC | 658 |
| 7 | Portland, Gresham/Multnomah County CoC | 651 |
| 8 | Seattle/King County CoC | 594 |
| 9 | Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County CoC | 591 |
| 10 | Sacramento City & County CoC | 584 |
| 39 | Raleigh/Wake County CoC | 133 |
| 40 | Wichita/Sedgwick County CoC | 132 |
| 41 | Miami-Dade County CoC | 123 |
| 42 | Memphis/Shelby County CoC | 114 |
| 43 | Jacksonville-Duval, Clay Counties CoC | 105 |
| 44 | Tampa/Hillsborough County CoC | 102 |
| 45 | El Paso City & County CoC | 96 |
| 46 | Milwaukee City & County CoC | 90 |
| 47 | Fort Worth, Arlington/Tarrant County CoC | 78 |
| 48 | Virginia Beach CoC | 77 |
| 49 | Houston, Pasadena, Conroe/Harris, Ft. Bend, Montgomery, Counties CoC | 50 |

#5 – Defining “recovery”



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