More people, making more money, are flocking to downtown L.A.
More people, making more money, are flocking to downtown L.A. — and they have more money to spend, downtown advocates declared as they unveiled the results of a new study Thursday.

"We have more people. They're making more money. They are more educated. And they are demanding more," said Carol Schatz, president and chief executive of the Downtown Center Business Improvement District.

Schatz based her comments on an online survey promoted through community newspaper ads, postcards and door hangers. It drew responses from more than 8,800 people, including more than 3,700 residents. The group cautioned the study was not a "census," but a sampling of "likely consumers."

It found that median household incomes of downtown residents had risen by 10% since its last survey two years ago, and that downtowners were also increasingly educated.

The Downtown Center Business Investment District, funded by special taxes in the downtown area, hopes the results spur more investment in the urban core. People who live, work or visit downtown said they were especially interested in a Trader Joe's or new department stores such as Nordstrom, the survey found. A Whole Foods is already on the way.

But the changes reshaping the city center have also raised worries about whether poorer residents will be served by a gentrified downtown.

"Low-income and middle-income people are also consumers," said Becky Dennison, co-director of the Los Angeles Community Action Network, an advocacy group for people in poverty. "Everybody needs to be taken into account when looking at the future."

The survey was released to reporters in a bright 9th Street loft owned by architect Simon Ha and his wife, Nikki Olson-Ha.

When they moved downtown six years ago, friends and family asked whether it was safe and where they would get groceries, Ha said. Now, people who hear they live downtown ask about new restaurants and how the neighborhood has changed, he said.

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Los Angeles is rather late to the game in getting its more visible, historically prominent areas, particularly downtown, into decent shape. That's assuming any city worth its salt should ever had allowed such neighborhoods to grow as deteriorated as downtown LA became in the first place.

The damage to the brand of "Los Angeles" has been fairly significant through the decades because of this, given the negative reviews and reactions that Los Angeles, going back years and continuing today, has triggered in visitors from far and wide. For awhile there -- and some wags may snort it still easily applies in 2013 -- LA was coming perilously close to being a sunnier version of Cleveland or Kalamazoo.

"Schatz based her comments on an online survey promoted through community newspaper ads, postcards and door hangers."

What an embarrassment to journalism.