



August 21, 2025

City Council Benchmark Report

Economic Development Office.

Summary: City Services Benchmark Overview for Jacksonville, AR

What Are the Benchmarks Based On?

The benchmarks provided in this report are based on recognized standards and best practices in urban planning, public safety, and municipal services, tailored for U.S. cities with populations around 30,000 residents. These standards draw from:

- National averages published by organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Urban Land Institute (ULI), and National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
- US Census-based service ratios, such as police officers per 1,000 residents or acres of parkland per capita
- Common practice among similarly sized peer cities across the southern United States

These metrics provide a practical planning framework for cities like Jacksonville to evaluate how well core services—such as healthcare, public safety, education, recreation, and retail—are positioned to meet community needs.

Jacksonville Service Performance

Public Safety


- Police Department:
Benchmark: 2.0–2.5 officers/1,000 residents (60–75)
Jacksonville: 55 sworn + 16 civilian staff
Status: ⚠ Below
- Fire Department:
Benchmark: 2–4 stations, Class 3 ISO or better
Jacksonville: 4 stations, ISO Class 2
Status: Exceeds
- EMS / Ambulance:
Benchmark: 1–2 stations, 24/7 coverage
Jacksonville: 3 ambulance crews via Fire Department
Status: Exceeds

Healthcare

- Hospitals:
Benchmark: 1 general hospital or regional access
Jacksonville: Unity Health – Jacksonville
Status: Meets

- Urgent Care Clinics:
Benchmark: 3–5 facilities
Jacksonville: Baptist Health, Jacksonville Med, Dispatch Health
Status: Meets
- Pharmacies:
Benchmark: 4–6
Jacksonville: 6+ including Walgreens, Walmart, Kroger
Status: Meets


Education

- K–12 Public Schools:
Benchmark: 1–2 HS, 1–2 MS, 3–5 ES
Jacksonville: JNPSD + Lighthouse Charter: 1 HS, 1 MS, 4 ES
Status: Meets
- Library:
Benchmark: 1–2 branches
Jacksonville: Nixon Library
Status:  Limited

Utilities & Services

- Water/Sewer/Public Works:
Benchmark: Centralized w/ compliance
Jacksonville: Jacksonville Water Works, Wastewater, Stormwater
Status: Meets
- Trash/Recycling:
Benchmark: 1 provider + drop-off
Jacksonville: Municipal trash + drop-off recycling
Status: Meets
- Animal Control:
Benchmark: 1 shelter or regional partner
Jacksonville: City Animal Control
Status: Meets

Transportation

- Public Transit:
Benchmark: 1–2 local routes or loops
Jacksonville: None noted
Status:  Absent
- Roads & Traffic:
Benchmark: Maintenance, signage, planning
Jacksonville: City Street Department
Status: Meets

Parks & Recreation

- Public Parks:
Benchmark: 8–12 parks (~10 acres/1,000 residents)
Jacksonville: 15 city parks
Status: Meets
- Sports Complex / Aquatics:
Benchmark: 1–2 major facilities
Jacksonville: Community Center, Excel Park, Dupree
Status: Meets

Housing Overview

Jacksonville has an estimated 15 apartment complexes, including 6 low-income or senior-focused facilities. This is below the benchmark of 20–30 total complexes for a city this size, providing a healthy balance of affordability and availability. **Several complexes are outdated and mismanaged, a new modern complex would enhance Jacksonville's ability to attract more residents.** Jacksonville is now seeing more townhomes going up which will also bring more value to the area. Multiple new homes are being built in the west Jacksonville area, this will add to the diversity of the local housing stock.

Grocery Store Access

Current grocery options include Walmart Supercenter, Kroger and Edwards Cash Savers. The benchmark recommends 3–5 full-service grocery stores for a city of this size. Jacksonville currently falls slightly short, highlighting an opportunity for recruitment.

Restaurant Segment

- Fast Food: 20–30 outlets (McDonald's, Taco Bell, Whataburger, Sonic, Slim Chickens etc.) – Exceeds benchmark (10–20)
- Casual Dining: 10–15 options (Chili's, Roma Italian, The Hook, 4 Elms Bistro, BBQ Shack, 1st Street Café, etc) – Meets benchmark (5–10)

Retail Segment

- Big Box: Walmart and Lowe's – Meets benchmark (1–2 anchors)
- Specialty Retail: 10–15 local shops – Meets benchmark, but needs are greater
- Apparel/Discount: Limited presence (no TJ Maxx, Bealls) – ⚠ Below benchmark (3–5 recommended)

Recent Store Closures

1. Discount Bins – Jacksonville

- A local liquidation outlet located at 915 W Main St, Discount Bins recently announced a closure and is “clearing everything out” as they intend to reopen in a new location.

2. Dirt Cheap

3. Bargain Hunt

The recent closure of Discount Bins, Dirt Cheap, and Bargain Hunt is understandably frustrating for Jacksonville residents who relied on these stores for affordable shopping options. While two of the closures—Dirt Cheap and Bargain Hunt—are part of larger nationwide shutdowns tied to corporate bankruptcies, the local impact is significant. However, these closures also create a new opportunity: the vacated properties are in high-visibility, high-traffic areas that are now primed for redevelopment. This opens the door to aggressively market these sites to grocery stores, national retailers, and other businesses that can better serve the community and strengthen Jacksonville’s retail landscape.

Conclusion & Strategic Insights

Jacksonville meets or exceeds benchmarks in most categories. Areas of focus for improvement include:

- Increasing police staffing
- Expanding public library services
- Recruiting an additional grocery store
- Growing apparel/discount retail options
- Exploring public transportation solutions

City Council Briefing: Jacksonville Market Overview

Reporting Period: August 1, 2024 – July 31, 2025

Source: Placer.ai Market Overview Report

I. General Visitation Trends

- **Total Visits Tracked:** Over **3.2 million** during the 12-month period.
- **Unique Visitors:** Approximately **960,000** individuals.
- **Average Dwell Time:** **46 minutes** per visit.
- **Visit Frequency:** Approximately **2.6 visits per person** on average across the year.

These numbers continue to support Jacksonville's position as a central shopping, service, and dining hub for both local and regional visitors.

II. Daypart and Weekly Trends

- **Top Visit Days:** Fridays see the highest foot traffic.
- **Busiest Time of Day:** **Midday (12:00–1:00 PM)** continues to be the peak hour for activity.

This affirms the consistent midday draw from both residents and daytime commuters, making Jacksonville an ideal location for:

- Sit-down and fast-casual restaurants,
 - Service-based businesses (banks, salons, medical offices),
 - Errand-focused retailers.
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III. Visitor Loyalty & Patterns

- **Returning Visitors:** Roughly **36%** of total visits were from repeat customers.
- **Top Destinations:** Walmart, Lowe's, and the Main Street retail corridor remain top anchors for foot traffic.

The repeat visitation metric supports the idea that Jacksonville has a loyal consumer base that frequents key retail zones, which is attractive to national chains and essential services.

IV. Market Demographics (Contextual Highlights)

- **Median Age of Visitors:** Between **25–44**, reinforcing a youthful, working-age audience.
- **Median Income Range of Visitors:** Most commonly **\$50K–\$75K annually**, with strong representation from middle-income households.

This demographic continues to reflect the family-driven and military-connected community already identified in earlier reports, aligning with ongoing recruitment efforts in:

- Family entertainment
- Discount/value retail
- Affordable dining and essential services

V. Strategic Implications for Economic Development

- **Jacksonville is Performing Consistently:** With over 3.2 million visits annually and nearly 1 million unique individuals, the city is a magnet for regional consumers.
- **Midday and Weekday Traffic is Key:** Development efforts should prioritize services that can activate during these times (e.g., medical clinics, lunch-focused restaurants, banks).
- **Repeat Visitation is Strong:** Businesses considering Jacksonville can rely on customer retention and recurring foot traffic as part of their success strategy.

Recommendations to City Council

1. **Continue Strategic Retail Recruitment**
 - Use repeat visitor data and high traffic patterns to attract retail and dining options that appeal to weekday, midday visitors.
2. **Enhance Anchors and Surrounding Areas**
 - Focus beautification grants and infrastructure support around top-performing zones such as Walmart, Main Street Plaza, and Redmond Rd.
3. **Promote Jacksonville’s Consumer Reliability**
 - Leverage Placer.ai data when speaking with prospective retailers to showcase Jacksonville’s strong foot traffic and repeat visitation potential.
4. **Support Infrastructure and Visibility Enhancements**
 - Ensure development corridors such as TP White and I-57 access roads remain highly visible and accessible to capitalize on consistent vehicle and pedestrian flows.

City Council Briefing: Jacksonville Market Demographics & Visitor Trends

Reporting Period: June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Source: Placer.ai Reports

I. Market Demographics Overview

Trade Area Profile

- Total Population (Trade Area): 151,788
- Median Household Income: \$61,014
- Average Household Size: 2.55
- Median Age: 36.6

Jacksonville's trade area is defined by working-age families, younger-than-average households, and moderate incomes. These characteristics support growth in family services, healthcare, discount retail, and family-focused dining and recreation.

Top Market Segments

- Middle Suburban Families
- Working-Class Singles and Families
- Military-Connected Households (due to LRAFB proximity)

The community mix supports businesses targeting budget-conscious families, military personnel, and young professionals.

Retail Gap Opportunities

- Grocery Stores: Underserved, with Edwards, Walmart and Kroger as the primary anchor.
- Sit-down Restaurants: Opportunity for chain and local full-service dining.
- Discount/Value Retail: Recently vacated sites (Bargain Hunt, Dirt Cheap) are prime for re-tenanting.

II. Visitor Behavior and Traffic Analysis

Annual Activity

- Total Visits: Over 3.25 million
- Unique Visitors: Approx. 980,000 devices
- Average Dwell Time: 46 minutes
- Top Visit Times: Fridays, 12:00–1:00 PM
- Repeat Visitors: 36% – a strong customer loyalty indicator

The city's visitation patterns show a strong draw for daily errands, weekday traffic, and midday activity—ideal for quick service and retail engagement.

Visitor Origins

Top ZIP Codes of Visitors:

1. 72076 (Jacksonville): 38%
2. 72120 (Sherwood): 14%
3. 72023 (Cabot): 11%
4. 72117 (NE Pulaski/NLR): 9%
5. 72116 (NLR): 8%

More than 60% of visitors come from outside Jacksonville, positioning the city as a regional retail and services hub.

III. Strategic Corridors & Real Estate Focus

High-Traffic Areas

- TP White Drive / Hwy 67/I-57 Corridor
- Redmond Road
- Main Street / Walmart Zone

These areas show the highest visitation and development potential for retail, restaurants, and services.

Redevelopment Opportunities

- Vacant retail sites (Bargain Hunt, Dirt Cheap)
- Main Street revitalization zones
- Industrial park-adjacent commercial lots

IV. Recommendations to City Council

1. Market Jacksonville as a Regional Destination
Leverage strong foot traffic from Sherwood, Cabot, and NLR to recruit restaurants, grocery chains, and general retail.
2. Incentivize Redevelopment of Vacant Sites
Promote use of A&P Beautification Grants and infrastructure support to attract new tenants to recently closed stores.
3. Enhance Food and Family Service Offerings
Capitalize on strong midday traffic and family demographics with new sit-down dining, childcare, and fitness/wellness options.
4. Support Development Near Anchors
Prioritize planning and permitting for projects near Walmart, Lowe's, and high-traffic corridors.
5. Highlight Jacksonville's Consumer Loyalty
Use visitation and dwell time metrics to appeal to national brands seeking stable, repeat customer bases.

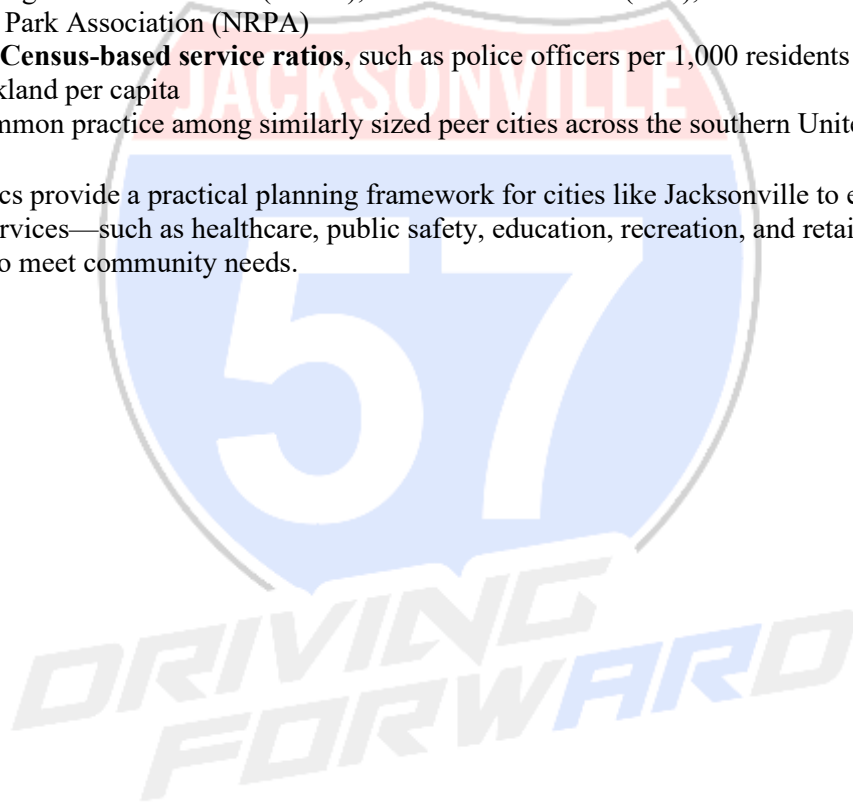
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- Common practice among similarly sized peer cities across the southern United States

These metrics provide a practical planning framework for cities like Jacksonville to evaluate how well core services—such as healthcare, public safety, education, recreation, and retail—are positioned to meet community needs.



Jacksonville Service Performance

| Category | Subcategory | Benchmark | Jacksonville Status | Rating |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--|---|-----------|
| Public Safety | Police Department | 2.0–2.5 officers/1,000 residents (60–75) | 55 sworn + 16 civilian staff | ⚠ Below |
| | Fire Department | 2–4 stations, Class 3 ISO or better | 4 stations, ISO Class 2 | ☑ Exceeds |
| | EMS / Ambulance | 1–2 stations, 24/7 coverage | 3 ambulance crews via Fire Department | ☑ Exceeds |
| Healthcare | Hospitals | 1 general hospital or regional access | Unity Health – Jacksonville | ☑ Meets |
| | Urgent Care Clinics | 3–5 facilities | Baptist Health, Jacksonville Med, Dispatch Health | ☑ Meets |
| | Pharmacies | 4–6 | 6+ including Walgreens, Walmart, Kroger | ☑ Meets |
| Education | K–12 Public Schools | 1–2 HS, 1–2 MS, 3–5 ES | JNPSD + Lighthouse Charter: 1 HS, 1 MS, 4 ES | ☑ Meets |
| | Library | 1–2 branches | Nixon Library | ⚠ Limited |
| Utilities & Services | Water/Sewer/Public Works | Centralized w/ compliance | Jacksonville Water Works, Wastewater, Stormwater | ☑ Meets |
| | Trash/Recycling | 1 provider + drop-off | Municipal trash + drop-off recycling | ☑ Meets |
| | Animal Control | 1 shelter or regional partner | City Animal Control | ☑ Meets |
| Transportation | Public Transit | 1–2 local routes or loops | None noted | ⚠ Absent |
| | Roads & Traffic | Maintenance, signage, planning | City Street Department | ☑ Meets |
| Parks & Recreation | Public Parks | 8–12 parks (~10 acres/1,000 residents) | 12 city parks | ☑ Meets |
| | Sports Complex / Aquatics | 1–2 major facilities | Community Center, Excel Park, Dupree | ☑ Meets |

Strategic Context: Proximity to Regional Centers

Jacksonville is uniquely positioned within **15–45 minutes of multiple regional hubs**, enhancing its access to extended amenities and labor markets:

| Nearby City | Distance | Relevance |
|-------------------|-----------|--|
| Sherwood | ~8 miles | Shared retail and workforce corridor; complementary school/residential mix |
| North Little Rock | ~10 miles | Access to regional healthcare, transportation, and retail |
| Cabot | ~11 miles | Bedroom community with rapid residential growth; shared commuter flow |
| Searcy | ~45 miles | Regional healthcare and higher education (Harding University) hub |

This proximity supports regional collaboration and allows Jacksonville to focus development on:

- **Mid-market housing**
- **Retail expansion**
- **Education/workforce access**
- **Air Force Base support services**

Summary of Findings

| Category | Score |
|--|-------|
| Total Categories Evaluated | 15 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds Benchmark | 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below / Needs Improvement | 3 |

Areas Needing Attention:

- **Police staffing:** Currently ~20% below national minimum recommendation
 - **Library access:** Only one public branch
 - **Public transit:** No formal fixed-route or shuttle loop service
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Final Notes

Jacksonville delivers strong core services, especially in fire protection, EMS, parks, and healthcare access. However, continued growth demands strategic focus in:

- Increasing law enforcement headcount
- Expanding public library services
- Exploring regional transit solutions, especially as the I-57 transition increases mobility and logistics flow

Restaurant Segment

Fast Food & Quick-Serve

Jacksonville has a *strong fast-food ecosystem* supported by both national chains and regional players. Prominent locations include:

- Taco Bell, Subway, McDonald's, Hardee's, Whataburger, Captain D's, Wendy's, and Burger King Slim Chickens, Popeyes, Wingstop, Rally's, Sonic, Firehouse Subs, Tropical Smoothie Coverage: Roughly 20–30 fast-food outlets, aligning with benchmarks of 10–20 per a city this size.

Casual & Full-Service Dining

Jacksonville offers a varied dining scene, including American, Asian, Southern, and Italian eateries:

- American/local: Chili's Grill & Bar; The Original Fried Pie Shop, Chicken Country
 - Asian/Japanese/Cajun: China Wok, K Hibachi, Kusina Cuisine, Octopus Sushi & Hibachi, New China Restaurant, Pho & More
 - Local gems: BBQ Shack, 4 Elms Bistro, Roma Italian, Emily's Diner, 1st Street Café, The Hook
Coverage: At least 10–15 casual/full-service venues, meeting the 5–10 benchmark.
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Retail Segment

Big-Box & Home Improvement

- Walmart Supercenter and Lowe’s serve as the major anchors
 ⚠️ Growth Area: There is no Target or equivalent big-box option currently in city limits.

Local & Specialty Retail

- Notable independent visuals include D2 Comics & More, Double R Florist, Oliver’s Antiques, Goodsell Truck Accessories.
- Discount store presence: With Bargain Hunt, Dirt Cheap and Discount Bins closing, that leaves a gap of retail in the city to drive sales tax.

Shopping Overview

- Some local retail diversity (10–15 independent/legacy shops)
- Absence of mid-range apparel/discounters like TJ Maxx, Bealls
 ⚠️ **Opportunity:** Growth potential in mid-tier retail to fully meet benchmark of 3–5 apparel/discount stores.

Summary Metrics

| Category | Jacksonville Count | Benchmark | Status |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Fast-Food Outlets | ~20–30 | 10–20 | ☑ Exceeds |
| Casual / Full-Service | ~10–15 | 5–10 | ☑ Meets |
| Big-Box Store Anchors | 2 (Walmart, Lowe’s) | 1–2 | ☑ Meets |
| Specialty/Local Retailers | 10–15 | 10–20+ storefronts | ☑ Meets |
| Apparel / Discount Retail | Sparse | 3–5 | ⚠️ Underdeveloped |

Conclusion & Strategic Insights

Jacksonville has developed a **well-rounded restaurant sector**, meeting or exceeding expectations in fast food and casual dining niches. The **retail landscape** is solid in essentials and local stores but shows the opportunity for more **apparel/discount outlets** to enhance consumer choice.