

Number of Downtown Residents Increase – Again

Even though 2009 has seen no new residential unit construction starts, 138 more residents now call Downtown Pensacola home than did this time last year. There are now 1202 households providing residences for 2140 people in Downtown Pensacola. This number represents almost a 7% increase in the number of people that call downtown home and pushes the overall occupancy of existing downtown residential units to 91%. The latest data continues a trend that started in 2006 and has resulted in a net gain of over 400 downtown residents since that time.

During 2009, several previously empty units got occupied and the average downtown household size grew larger (currently 1.78 people per household). As a result, the total number of people living alone dropped from 42% in 2008 to 38% this year. However, even with that slight decline, 87% of all downtown households still have two or fewer people living in them. The most typical household configuration is now that of spouses or partners living in the same unit. The only other notable change in household configuration was an increase in the number of households where children live with their parents (i.e. 15% in 2009 as compared to 12% in 2008). As a result, twenty percent of all downtown households now include children under the age of 18 – up 9% from 2008.

While the average age of downtown residents is still in the early 50s, the number of female residents has dropped to 56% (60% in 2008) while males now comprise 44% (40% in 2008).

Another interesting finding from the 2009 residential data is that just over 50% of all households in the downtown now have household incomes in excess of \$60,000 per year. In fact, 33% of the all households now have household incomes above \$100,000 per year – up 2% from 2008. The employment status of working age downtown residents remained practically unchanged; although, the percentage of retired residents did increase from 34% to 35%. The percentage of downtown residents with at least a college degree remained unchanged at 64%. General Business, Medical, and Government remained the top three employment sectors for downtown residents from 2008 to 2009. Forty-six percent of the downtown residents with jobs work in the downtown. As a result, downtown residents now hold 7% of all the jobs in Downtown Pensacola. Another interesting revelation from the 2009 residential census was that 5% of the downtown residents that work do so outside of Florida – up from 1% in 2008. Put another way, 5% of the downtown residents that work choose to live in Downtown Pensacola but earn their living in another state or country. This is a very positive trend for downtown.

Downtown residents 18 years of age and older also have one of the highest percentage of voter registration rates in the county at 91% and regularly participate in electoral processes at a rate higher than most other areas of the county.

When asked where they primarily purchase groceries, some encouraging trends were again reinforced. While Wal-Mart remained the primary destination for weekly grocery shopping (23% in 2009 compared to 30% in 2008), Apple Market (14%) and Ever'man Natural Food (12%) moved into the top three grocery store locations with each showing significant growth in patronage by downtown residents during 2009.

Forty-eight percent of downtown residents have lived in downtown Pensacola for five years or less while only 12% have lived here for more twenty years. The top four reasons for living in Downtown Pensacola identified by downtown residents this year are: 1) convenient central location, 2) walkability, 3) abundant cultural offerings, and 4) the variety of restaurants and nightlife in the downtown.

All in all, the 2009 Downtown Residential Census data was encouraging and further reinforced some existing positive trends. With these results, it's no wonder that Downtown Pensacola remains the fastest growing neighborhood in the City. Such continued growth can only mean more market opportunities for downtown businesses and more people out and about enjoying and partaking of all that downtown has to offer.

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