



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Living Downtown Survey Results

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To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the findings of the Living Downtown Survey conducted by City Planning in December 2006. The bulletin “Profile Toronto: Living Downtown” is attached and has been posted on the City’s website.

The Downtown population grew by 47% over the last 30 years and by 10% between 2001 and 2006. In the past 5 years, the Downtown population grew by 14,800 - the largest 5-year population increase in Downtown over the last 30 years. During this time 17,000 new housing units were built Downtown. The living Downtown survey was designed to profile the demographic characteristics of those moving Downtown and to gain an understanding of housing demand Downtown.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Residential growth in Downtown Toronto between 2001 and 2006 was brisk. Over this five year period, 17,000 new Downtown housing units were built and occupied, but little is known about the residents who live in these new homes. Census data, provided by Statistics Canada, is the primary source of demographic information used to profile the population and it is released over a period of years. At present, the only complete set of population data comes from the 2001 Census. While limited data from the 2006 Census are now available, a large portion of the 2006 Census information will not be released until later in 2007 and 2008. The Living Downtown Survey was designed to fill this

information gap. The survey provides a means of learning more about those who are moving into new Downtown housing, their motivations for living Downtown, and whether or not those living in newer housing units are any different from those who live in older Downtown housing. Questionnaires were mailed to 15,500 homes throughout the Downtown area. Completed questionnaires were returned from 2,620 households for a response rate of 17.6% yielding a margin of error of +/- 1.7%, 19 times out of 20. Roughly half the responses came from people living in newer housing while the other half of respondents live in housing built prior to 2001.

COMMENTS

Who Lives Downtown

The Downtown population has been increasing steadily over the last 30 years. According to Statistics Canada, the Downtown population increased by 65% during this period. Over the last 5 years, the Downtown population grew by 10% as 14,800 new residents moved into the area - the largest 5-year population increase in Downtown over the last 30 years.

The results of the Living Downtown Survey show that a large proportion of people who are moving into new Downtown housing tend to be young adults under 40 years of age and the majority of households are occupied by either single persons or couples without children. They also tend to be well educated, most are employed full-time within the Downtown area and household incomes among this group tend to be relatively high. However, while general trends stand out, the complete profile reveals a varied demographic profile of those living in new Downtown housing. For example, over one-third of those living in new Downtown residences are over 40 years of age and 6% are over 65. In addition, while 84% of households in new Downtown units are singles or couples without children, 9% are families with children.

Resident Mobility

The Living Downtown Survey asked respondents to indicate if they had moved within the last five years, where they previously lived and if they intended to move in the near future. The results of this series of questions show that the Downtown housing market is very active. While a good portion of new residents choose to live in newer developments, the older Downtown housing stock, built before 2001, has also seen significant resident turnover. More than one-third of survey respondents who occupy older Downtown housing have lived in the same location for 2 years or less and about one-half have been in the same residence for less than 5 years.

Survey respondents who moved into their current Downtown home within the last 5 years were more likely to have previously lived elsewhere in Toronto than in the surrounding regions of the GTA. The survey results also show that among current Downtown residents who moved from previous homes within Toronto, the majority moved from a previous residence in other Downtown locations or from within the five-kilometre area surrounding Downtown. These two areas account for 81% of all intra-City migration to

the Downtown area. This finding is also true for those living in newer (81%) and older Downtown housing (83%).

The Living Downtown Survey also gauged the degree of current resident mobility in the Downtown area by asking respondents how likely they were to move in the future. Among those who live in newer Downtown housing, 73% indicated that they intended to move within the next 5 years and 51% of those living in older housing expressed a similar intent. In both newer and older housing, those between the ages of 25 and 40 represent the largest proportion of those who see another move in the near future. About two-thirds indicated that they intended to stay Downtown.

Why People Live Downtown

Questions were posed to probe the reasons why people choose to live Downtown and what specific amenities they like, or dislike about where they live. Proximity to work/school, public transit, entertainment, shopping and other aspects of an “urban lifestyle” (the notion of living in an urban setting within close proximity to all aspects of one’s daily life) were the top reasons for choosing to live Downtown. The top 10 reasons for living Downtown accounted for three quarters of all listed reasons and were identical for those living in both newer and older dwellings. The only difference between the two groups was the ranking. For instance, the top two reasons, being close to work/school and access to public transit, accounted for 33% of all responses. Being close to work/school was ranked higher among those living in newer residences.

Why People Choose Their Current Residence

Respondents were presented with a list of potential reasons for choosing a particular residence and were asked to rank these reasons based on how important they were in choosing the dwelling in which they currently live. The top reasons that emerged were related more to the location of the residence than to the physical aspects or amenities of the building itself. Being close to public transit, work, entertainment, and shopping were ranked highest. The highest ranked dwelling amenities included number of bedrooms, the presence of a balcony or terrace, the views from the residence, the availability of parking and building design.

Why People Intend to Move

Those who indicated an intent to move within the next 5 years were asked to provide the factors that would prompt such a move. The most common reasons include finding a bigger dwelling, moving closer to work, school and public transit, getting a more affordable unit and finding a better building. The five main reasons for choosing a new location were consistent among both those living in newer and older residences. Beyond the top five reasons for choosing a new location some differences between the two groups of respondents become apparent. For example, those living in newer residences expressed an interest in finding a new location with better views in a friendlier neighbourhood while those living in older residences showed more concern for the safety and security of their current location. In addition, many of those living in older residences would like to move out of their current rental accommodations and purchase their next home.

CONCLUSIONS

The Living Downtown survey yields insight into the demand for housing and living patterns in the fastest growing part of the City. The rate of turnover of occupancy of the Downtown housing stock is most interesting. More than one-third of those living in older housing Downtown have been in that location for 2 years or less, and one-half have been in their homes for less than 5 years. Most of these Torontonians have moved from a location elsewhere Downtown or from the extended inner city. Information gleaned from this survey will help City staff to plan for community and other services.

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ATTACHMENTS

“Profile Toronto: Living Downtown
<http://www.toronto.ca/planning>

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