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Downtown Portland sees decline in jobs,  
Continued positive feelings on safety, cleanliness  
*Business Census and Survey also shows spike in mass transit commuting*

Portland, Ore. – Signs of the country’s economic downturn are evident throughout the Central City, according to the results of the Portland Business Alliance’s annual Downtown Business Census and Survey. The survey showed a significant drop in jobs as well as a decline in the number of businesses expecting to expand over the next few years.

In the annual survey, which counts jobs in the I-5/I-405 corridor, the Alliance found that the total number of people employed in the Central City fell from 86,000 in 2007 to fewer than 83,000 in 2008. Also, government-related entities now account for half of the top 10 employers in the downtown core.

“This year’s survey results demonstrate why private-sector job creation is our top priority,” said Charles Wilhoite, chair of the Portland Business Alliance board of directors. “It took us five years to climb out of the job slump created by the 2001 economic downturn. Now we’ve slid backwards again. This is not good news for Portland-region families, and we’ve got to redouble our efforts to create and maintain good, family-wage jobs.”

The Alliance’s annual survey counted 86,769 jobs in 2001, but that number fell to 82,023 in 2002. The Central City didn’t achieve recovery from the 2001 loss until 2007, when the job count was 86,131. The 2008 count of 83,000 puts the Central City back at the 2004 level.

“These findings reinforce the Alliance’s support for the city’s new economic development plan,” said Wilhoite. “It is critical that we achieve the city’s goal of creating 10,000 new jobs during the next five years, with many in the downtown core. A strong region needs a strong downtown, with a diversity of job types. We can’t lose our focus on maintaining a healthy Central City.”

The Alliance survey found that a variety of sectors have lost jobs in the past year including wholesale trade, utilities and food service. The largest losses were experienced in the retail, information and warehousing sectors. Three areas added jobs: finance and insurance; arts, entertainment and recreation; and public administration.

Other survey data shows a decline in business improvement and a decrease in the number of businesses planning to expand their businesses over the next two years.

Despite the downturn, attitudes about the safety and cleanliness of downtown remain positive. The responses show that 98 percent of downtown workers feel that downtown is safe while 78 percent feel it is clean. Downtown workers do feel, however, that the increasing presence of panhandlers and public inebriates exerts a significant detrimental impact on downtown, citing it as the top factor that needs improvement. In earlier surveys, construction was the most pressing concern.

In terms of how employees are getting to work downtown, the census shows a drop in those commuters driving alone, from 42 to 37 percent, and a slight up tick in the number of people taking MAX or the bus, from 43 percent to 44 percent. In fact, since the 2005 survey was conducted there has been a 23-percent decrease in people driving alone.

The census is conducted by the Alliance research department using mailed questionnaires, with personal follow-up and block-by-block canvassing to obtain a 100 percent response rate. It is funded by downtown property owners through Portland Downtown Services, Inc.

The census and survey provides an information resource for prospective downtown tenants and developers, establishes benchmarks and provides year-to-year tracking of leading economic indicators and progress toward downtown development goals. It also provides a better understanding of the needs of existing downtown businesses.

Downtown Redevelopment Report also available  
Alliance researchers and Heritage Consulting Group recently released the annual Central City Development and Redevelopment Projects report. The report provides a comprehensive look at real estate development in the Central City including the area just west of the I-405 Loop, South Waterfront, Lloyd District and the Central Eastside. It includes projects under construction, projects in design, projects in concept and projects completed since 2002. This report is also funded by downtown property owners.

Both reports are available on the Portland Business Alliance Web site at [http://www.portlandalliance.com/downtown\\_services/downtown-market-research.html](http://www.portlandalliance.com/downtown_services/downtown-market-research.html)

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*The Portland Business Alliance is Greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce representing more than 1,400 businesses in the region. Our mission is to ensure economic prosperity in the Portland region by providing strong leadership, partnership and programs that encourage business growth and vitality. Visit the Alliance at [www.portlandalliance.com](http://www.portlandalliance.com).*