

## **The Five Major Types of Resident**

Understanding urban planning can be a vast and, sometimes, an overwhelming endeavor, but necessary in the creation of viable communities. In this article, we will begin looking at the different types of resident(s) that populate urban areas by the stages in which they are categorized.

Residential populations can be viewed in many ways. Renter or owner. Rural, suburban or inner-city; to name a few areas. This issue will focus on stages and/or phases of a residential area. First, let's examine or lay the foundation for the topic at hand. Each urban residential community is comprised of various neighbors or areas occupied by people. These areas may be densely populated (*New York City, New York*) or spread-out over vast diverse areas (*Houston, Texas*). On the surface, these types of communities have little similarities. The following are five (5) general categories in which most communities within an area can be grouped.

### **1) Young Adult**

#### *General Characteristics:*

The category of Young Adult is comprised of people ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. This category is heavily populated by citizens that are college students, entry-level professionals and new employees; to name a few. This group is highly social and energetic. Meaning, they are "on-the-go". To many in this category, the elements of independent living are new and exciting. They are becoming aware of the world as a place that is varied and full of opportunity or lacking. A notable occurrence to this group is the awareness of consistent earned resources; financial or otherwise. As a result of this new understanding, this group is full of ideas and willing to work towards the implementation of these ideas. Because this group is at the beginning stages of their development, social networking is a key element. Shared resources are secondary to the ability to socially bond with similar thinking individuals.

*Preferred Environment:* Social and innovative.

*Type of Living Scenario Preferred:* Multi-Family. This inclusive of apartments and multi-family living spaces like flats, duplexes and other areas with multiple members within the unit. Dormitories are another example of this category.

### **2) Independent Adult**

#### *General Characteristics:*

The category of Independent Adult is entered after the young adult has experienced a series of events that begins to challenge the beliefs of their life and lifestyles. This stage is usually entered into around 25 years of age and may

continue throughout the lifetime of many individuals, but generally enters into a family scenario. In this phase, the Independent Adult begins to leave the comfort of the group in a quest for the independence and fulfillment of their personal goals. A major change in this group is the realization of disposable income. As a young adult, the idea of earning a living was realized. As an Independent Adult, actual earning of money and other resources becomes actualized. This means they are now in the position to earn a living and accumulate extra money (*however small or large the sum*). This new disposable income brings about changes in personality, selection of social network and life desires. Amongst the top desires is the desire to select the living quarters of their choice.

*Preferred Environment:* Stability with access to amenities.

*Type of Living Scenario Preferred:* Independent living space. This is inclusive of single-family homes (*attached and detached*), condominiums and other spaces without room-mates.

### **3) Family**

*General Characteristics:*

The “Family” scenario is entered into after the independent adult makes the decision to share resources with additional members to create a new unit. This scenario is different from the young adult selecting a room-mate(s) to form networks based more on social bonds opposed to resources. The family scenario is a sharing of resources, goals and life desires. The importance of these decisions, regarding urban planning, is more consideration is given to the amenities and support mechanisms available to them. Proximity to and type of schools becomes a major deciding factor. Access to retail outlets, as well as other recreational and leisure activities are essential to this population. Family entertainment is also key in decision-making. Moreover, public safety is a priority to families. The general age range for this population ranges from the late 20’s until the mid-late 50’s; inclusive of children.

*Preferred Environment:* Stable, safe and accessible to family oriented amenities.

*Type of Living Scenario Preferred:* Independent living spaces with the flexibility to accommodate short and long-term family plans. Single family homes are preferred in this category.

### **4) Empty Nester**

*General Characteristics:*

The Empty Nester is a person or groups of people that have either completed the rearing of children and/or decided that the long-term primary home they have lived is no longer suitable for the lifestyle and/or resources available to them.

This phase or stage is experienced after the Family or Independent Adult has established themselves in careers and/or have achieved many of the career and career oriented goals set forth for themselves. Empty-nesters seek scenarios that usually scale back or down to amount of resources expended toward living arrangements. Maintenance of and expending resources toward the scenarios that supported family activities is no longer an attractive option for this category. The typical age range for this category is in the mid to late 50's until the mid to late 60's.

*Preferred Environment:* Areas that can accommodate the recreational and leisure activities desired, as well as lifelong learning and development goals.

*Type of Living Scenario Preferred:* Independent living spaces with less maintenance than their previous living scenario.

## 5) Senior

### *General Characteristics:*

The Senior population, as it relates to this article, is the group of residents that have experienced the aforementioned phases and have made the decision to adjusted their lifestyles to accommodate their *abilities* to attain and manage the resources in their lives. Senior populations seek living scenarios that are independent, if possible, but close to support functions and necessities. Meaning, Senior populations seek areas that are close to quality of life service providers like health care facilities, local grocery stores, transportation services, public transportation hubs and senior oriented recreation and leisure activities. This group also is less interested in allocating resources towards visionary ideas and more likely to support activities that sustain quality of life.

*Preferred Environment:* Tranquil and Supportive Towards Maintaining Good Health

*Type of Living Scenario Preferred:* Independent Living Spaces that are attached to or close to support facilities. Senior living complexes, independent living complexes, condominiums are preferred, but nursing and homes are also included in this population.

The understanding of these groups and the psychographics therein can equip decision-makers with powerful tools to create and sustain viable communities. Without a basic understanding of the populations within neighborhoods and communities of an urban area, chaos *will* ensue.

The five aforementioned categories are given to group the most obvious characteristics in understanding the basic groups within a given urban area.

There are no absolutes in either group and sometimes these groups share behavioral traits and characteristic. But most likely, an urban neighborhood or community area can be defined in one of these categories. This is not to say additional understanding is not needed to manage, maintain and create positive growth within the area. It is, though, a foundation to begin understanding why behaviors may or may not occur in an area. For example, retail outlets are best developed near groups with the largest sums of disposable income. Clearly, young adults frequent malls and other retail venues more often than the other groups, but they lack the resources to fully participate in the retail experience. Independent Adult and Family populations are the primary targets for retail shopping due to the higher levels of disposable income, as well as the need for the products being sold (*Children's clothing, appliances and other goods and supplies are necessities for these groups; to name a few areas*). Whereas, retail outlets are primarily social networking venues for Young Adults and places for occasional visits for Empty Nesters and Senior Populations. This is true for most district types throughout an urban area.

The ability to sustain, develop and/or attract the desired populations to an urban area relies heavily on what is known about the existing and desired populations within the area. A thorough and realistic understand of the type of population within a given area can result in favorable outcomes to a community. New businesses locate in places like these, because decision-makers are prepared in their efforts to promote and market the various areas under their jurisdiction. The opposite is also true. Decision-makers that lack an understanding of the types of populations they represent often fail to match the community with opportunities and/or secure resources needed in the community. In many cases, these types of communities become unmanageable and there is a mixing of the groups that leads to various community problems. Young Adults are perceived to make too much noise; according to Senior populations. Independent Adults do not like the children riding their skateboards on the neighborhood curbs or hanging out in the streets. The families think there is not enough cooperation to assist the community school(s) and other community efforts. These are all problems when there is no understanding of how to plan for and attract similar populations to areas that have mutual interests. This is the micro/neighborhood level. This lack of understanding can create major problems at macro levels.

At macro levels, decision-makers' failure to identify their dominant or majority population and create "resource hemorrhaging"<sup>1</sup>. Resource Hemorrhaging is when vital parts of the community/area begin to leave the area and there appears to be no apparent method of stopping the exodus. These resources may be human, financial or institutional. In many cases, the resources either verbally seek help prior to leaving or exhibit indicative behaviors that suggest leaving is

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<sup>1</sup> The use of Resource Hemorrhaging, as an urban planning theme, is a concept developed by Central Place Planning Professionals, LLC



inevitable. A clear example of this can be found in many college towns throughout the United States. College towns/areas possess a major appeal for certain population type. In understanding this, many town mayors and leaders focus their efforts towards retaining former students to become permanent residents. In understanding the characteristics of the former students, the city leadership develops plans to work with the colleges/universities as well as businesses to create the types of communities desired. The contrary of this is college towns that struggle to find resources to sustain their institutions, but have failed to identify valuable human and other resources. By understanding the types of populations within an area and the types of populations desired, stable and viable communities can be developed, sustained and grown.

These are some of the elements to understanding the various types of urban community residents. There are many sub-categories to each of these and other more specific categories for specialized communities. These were given, as stated in the beginning, to lay a foundation for the topic. Central Place Planning Professionals, LLC, being a comprehensive urban planning and design firm, is prepared to assess, identify and create plans that will assist in attracting and creating the type of communities desired.

For specific implementation strategies, please contact our office at (866) 546-2722. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

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