

## The Palafox Public Market: Just One More Reason To Visit Downtown On A Saturday

The first two years of operation for the Palafox Public Market both turned out better than expected. More vendors, more customers, and more activity are all measurements that any like effort would welcome. The numbers for each during the second season exceeded the numbers from the prior season and the projection for that year of operation. The third edition of this eclectic and authentic open-air market has been just as encouraging so far.

Opening just a few weeks ago on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the market has enjoyed mostly beautiful weekend weather, an increased numbers of vendors, and even larger numbers of customers than in prior years. Specifically, the number of vendors has exceeded 40 for every weekend but one (and that weekend had 39 vendors) so far. One weekend last month set the record for the 2010 season with 54 vendors – and it rained a little in the early afternoon that Saturday. The number of customers or patrons visiting the market has exceeded 1300 almost every weekend and never dipped below 1000. The Saturday before Memorial Day saw the customer/patron number shoot up above 2500 for the first time this season. If these figures continue, the Palafox Public Market will be the largest farmers market (although about half of the vendors each Saturday are actually growers) in the three county region – in just its third year.

Not only are more and more people finding the Palafox Public Market every Saturday, increasing numbers of “regulars” are coming back week after week to visit their favorite vendors. The majority of customers/patrons come from the close-in neighborhoods as well as from all over the county. Increasingly, visitors to the area (i.e. tourists) are also finding or seeking out the market to experience the local color or local flavor provided by the farmers, bakers, and artisans that hail from Escambia, Santa Rosa and Baldwin counties.

While the primary motivation for the “regulars” to visit each week is to get fresh local produce, plants, or original local art; they also enjoy the experience and the environment that the bustling and colorful market provides under the oaks at Martin Luther King Plaza (North Palafox Street between Chase and Gregory Streets). It has also become a place to meet friends or neighbors or just simply enjoy the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Pensacola on a Saturday. There are over 1200 fans on the Palafox Market face book page – a number that grows each week. Over 1000 “regulars” have signed up for the weekly “What’s fresh on the Palafox Market” electronic newsletter that highlights the new and unique vendors and their products scheduled for the following Saturday.

The benefits from the crowds coming to Downtown Pensacola for the Palafox Public Market are immediately visible and recognizable. From showcasing the opportunities that exist in the few adjacent buildings to providing fantastic exposure for adjoining businesses, there is positive spillover occurring in downtown because of the market. The capturing of that impact has been more a factor of design than of sheer location. The market operates an information booth each Saturday, staffed by a different downtown retailer or restaurateur. Part of the function of the information booth is to distribute a downtown map showing the location and hours of

operation for all retailers and restaurants open on Saturday as well as information about nearby parking and the locations of downtown ATMs.

The Palafox Public Market operates every Saturday from the first of May to the end of October during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Martin Luther King Plaza on N. Palafox Street. If you haven't been this year yet or if you have never been, you're missing a really fabulous and unique Pensacola experience. And, it is helping to make Saturday one of the better traffic and sales days for our retailers and restaurants.

Franklin D. Kimbrough  
Executive Director