CITY LIFE: Robert Babigian, owner of WHARF Clothing & Wares, is moving his six-month-old business from Warwick to Providence. He’s hoping his clothing store can take advantage of a growing downtown population.

Downtown place to work – and live

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When Robert Babigian opened WHARF Clothing & Wares in Warwick about six months ago, he never thought he’d be relocating his apparel-and-accessories shop for men in his first year of operation.

But that is exactly what he is doing because he sees better business prospects in downtown Providence than in suburban Warwick, thanks to a population boom in that area of the capital. Babigian is taking full advantage of a national trend – people are returning to the cities to live.

The 2010 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that downtown Providence’s population increased 65 percent in the last decade, with young, educated professionals helping lead the charge. That’s the largest increase of any Providence neighborhood in the last 10 years, according to Patrick J. McGuigan, executive director of The Providence Plan.