



2016 Summerland Business Walk Report



A collaboration of the Summerland Chamber of Commerce
and
The District of Summerland.

2016 Summerland Business Walk



A “Business Walk” is an economic development initiative designed to provide information about the local business climate through face-to-face interviews with business owners. The format is very simple; over the course of a few hours, multiple small teams of 2 or 3 people visit a number of local businesses to ask some brief questions. In this way a large number of businesses can be contacted in a short time.

Local leaders and volunteers visit businesses with the hope of gathering information to support the business community and to strengthen relationships. The primary goals of a Business Walk are:

- To discover the issues facing the business community
- To enhance working relationships between decision makers and local businesses
- To provide local businesses with information about business resources

On Thursday, April 14th, Summerland Chamber of Commerce Board members teamed up with Mayor Waterman and District of Summerland Councillors to conduct our second Summerland Business Walk.

Five teams met with 38 businesses face-to-face. The 3 primary questions were:

1. How’s business? (3 choices were provided)
2. What do you like about doing business in Summerland?
3. What can be done to help your business thrive?

It is important to note that in this business walk we were interested in capturing a snapshot of where our business community is right now. Upon close examination of the responses, it was clear that answers to Questions #2 and #3 fell into general ‘themes’ and that is what has been reported below.

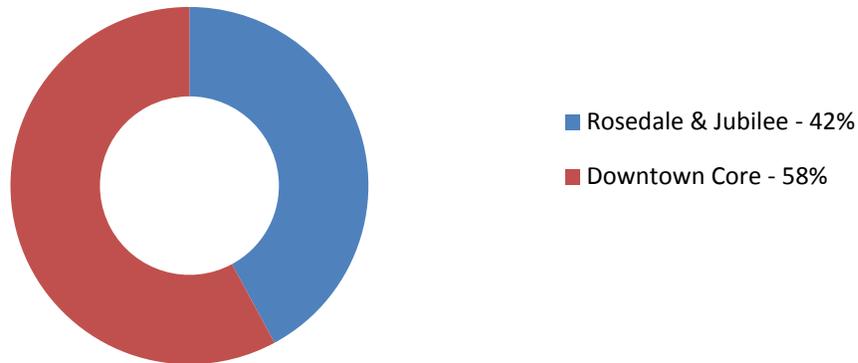
The information contained in this report summarizes what was learned from these visits. If you did not have the opportunity to respond in this year’s Business Walk and survey, we look forward to having your input in the next event.

Erick Thompson
President
Summerland Chamber of Commerce

Who Responded?

For the April 2016 Business Walk we had 38 businesses participate in the survey, either face-to-face or through submitted email forms. The participants were drawn from two different business areas in Summerland; the downtown core and the Rosedale/Jubilee corridor.

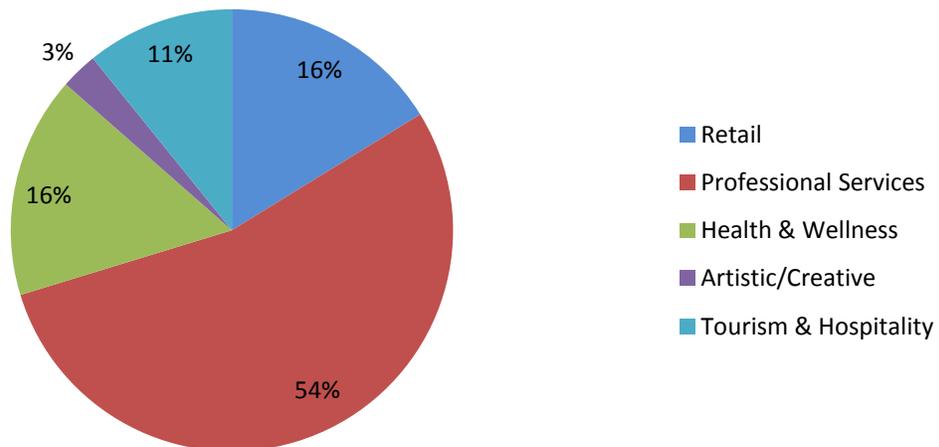
Fig.1 Who Responded?



Industries Captured

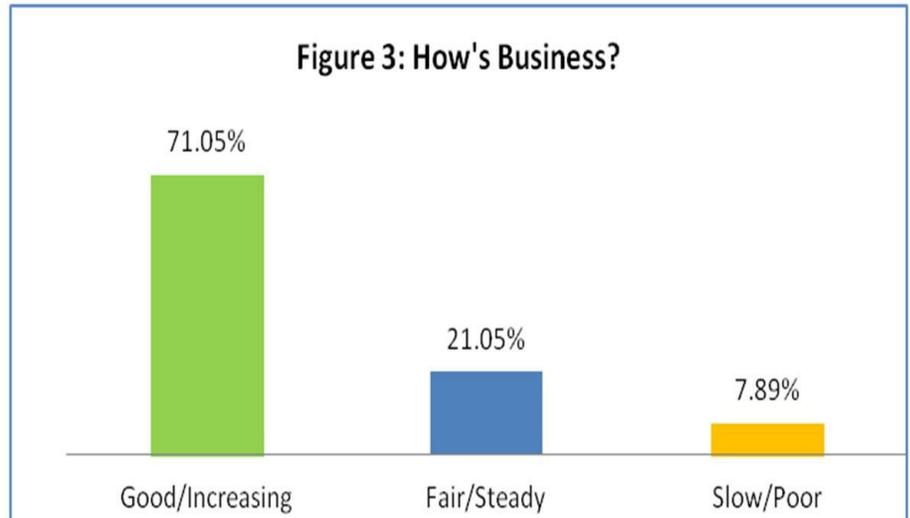
A number of sectors were captured in the Business Walk survey, from retail and healthcare, to creative and professional services. (See Figure. 2).

Figure 2: Industries Captured



How's Business?

Each business owner was asked the question "How's business?" and was given the choice of three responses: "Good/Increasing", "Fair/Steady", or "Slow/Poor" (See Figure.3). Of the 38 responses, 92.1% reported that they fell under the "Good/Increasing" or "Fair/Steady" categories. This is a slight increase over Oct 2015 when 90% reported that business was good or fair. Only 7.89% report that business has been Slow/Poor.



Why do you like doing business in Summerland?

Business owners and operators spent time with the volunteers talking about why they like having their business in Summerland. Responses varied greatly and were categorized into the themes shown in Figure 4. "People/Clientele" was cited as the main reason most people enjoy owning businesses in Summerland.



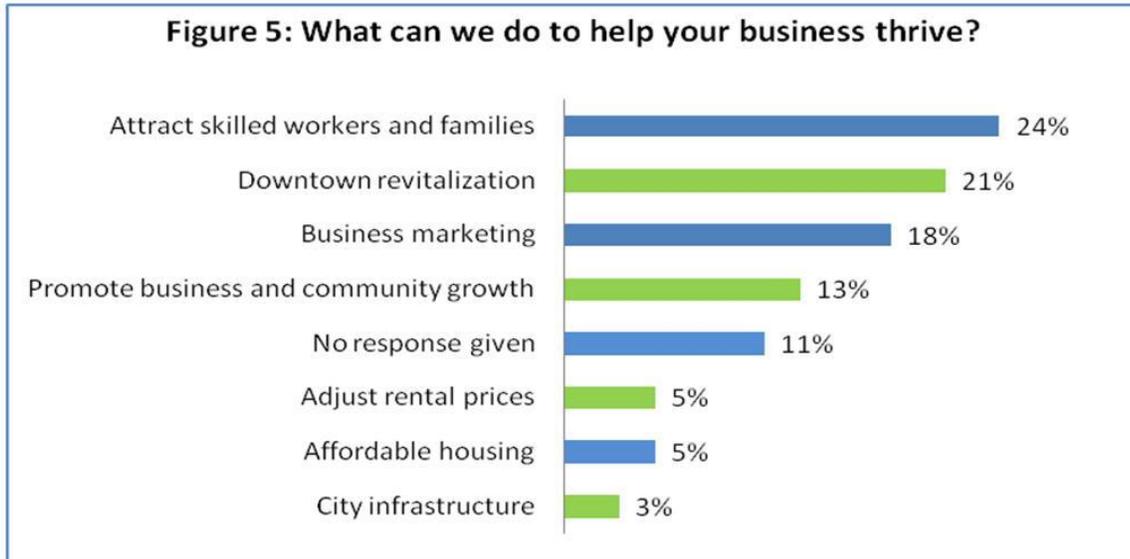
"Summerland as a community is a great town for families."

"Summerland is quiet enough to get to know clients on a personal level."

"Everything you need is right here in town."

"I love the small-town feel, and so does my clientele, who visit from all over the valley."

What can we do to help your business thrive?



One of the most helpful aspects of the Business Walk is finding out from local businesses what they need to succeed and some of the concerns they have facing their business and the community itself. As the question was open-ended, responses were quite varied, but were synthesized into the “themes” illustrated in Figure 5. The most common theme among respondents was the need to attract skilled workers and families to Summerland, which goes hand in hand with other commonly mentioned themes, such as affordable housing and the promotion of Summerland and the business opportunities here.

“Giving the Downtown area a facelift is very important for my business. ”

“Help us by getting the word out about the business; word of mouth is vital!”

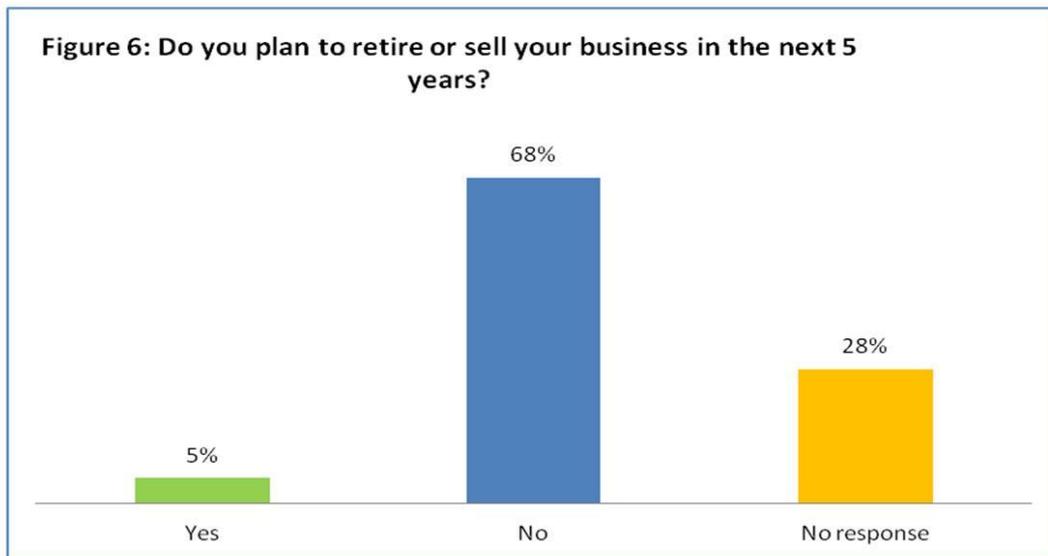
“Not only is there no housing now, but there will be nothing in the future as well unless changes are made.”

“We need to draw new businesses and families into Summerland!”

“Many people want to move here, but there are few rentals and limited housing options.”

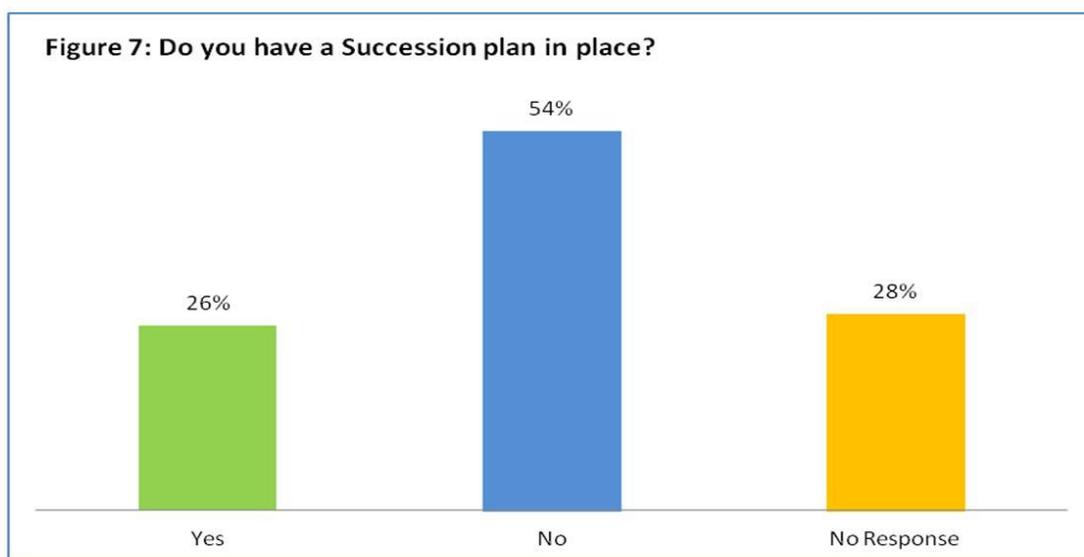
Do you plan to retire or sell your business in the next 5 years?

If the business owner was being interviewed, the volunteers inquired about the status of their business over the next 5 years. An overwhelming majority (Figure. 6) declared no intention of retiring or selling their business in the next few years, with just over 5% reporting that they were looking to sell their business or retire in this time frame.



Do you have a succession plan in place?

Business owners were also asked if they had a succession plan in place for retirement, or for when they decide to sell their business. Half of all business owners surveyed do not have a succession plan prepared for their retirement or departure from the business. (See Figure. 7).



Conclusion

The second Summerland Business Walk was very positive. It achieved 3 primary goals:

- To discover the issues facing the business community
- To enhance working relationships between the Council/Chamber leaders and local businesses
- To provide local businesses with educational resources (Attachment 2.). – Attached Business resources list.

The Chamber Board members, Mayor and Council, and Summerland business owners found the Walk to be a positive and informative experience. We believe that the information in this report can serve as a catalyst for changes that will enhance our business environment and also serve as a comparison for which future “Walks”.

Positive changes have already come from this initiative. We have implemented the #Discoverhome Shop Local campaign, partly in response to the Nov 2015 Business Walks’ comments that such a project was needed here in Summerland. The Chamber is holding social media workshops in May and has also begun planning a series of business succession planning workshops to be held later this year. With this 2016 information in hand, we hope to develop further projects and initiatives to benefit Summerland.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Summerland business community for warmly welcoming the walkers and sharing your candid views either in person or via email.

The Chamber wishes to thank The District of Summerland’s Mayor and Council for participating in the 2016 Business Walk.



2016 Walking Teams



Chamber President Erick Thompson & Summerland Mayor Peter Waterman
Chamber VP Robert Hacking & Councilor Janet Peake
Director Colin Powell & Councilor Doug Holmes
Director Julian Scholefield & Councilor Erin Trainer
Chamber Executive Director Christine Petkau w/ Director Michael Hughes & Councilor
Toni Boot (Chamber Liaison)

Questions

For questions regarding this report and the 2016 Business Walk, please contact:

Christine Petkau, Executive Director
Summerland Chamber of Commerce
(250) 494-2686
cpetkau@summerlandchamber.com

Appendix.1

Figure. 5

The question “What can be done to help your business thrive?” received a number of varied responses that we have synthesized into main themes. These themes highlight the main areas that businesses felt need attention in our community. This is the breakdown of the themes.

Attract Skilled Workers and Families – 24%. These percentages of respondents feel that more needs to be done to attract a younger and more highly educated and trained demographic to Summerland. Many businesses are A) finding it difficult to fill their staffing requirements and B) noticing a decrease in clientele due to an ageing population. This is the highest ranked concern, and often partners with others in this section.

Downtown Revitalization – 21%. People directly stated that the downtown core needed to be revitalized or improved in some form.

Business Marketing – 18%. The responses in the category were based on the need for increased business marketing within the community. This entails ideas such as, increased chamber marketing, improving their own business’s marketing strategies or looking into new, creative ways to attract clientele.

Promote Business and Community Growth – 13%. This is a broad compilation of a few categories, including:

- The promotion of Summerland as a business friendly region to other communities.
- Creation of economic initiatives such as grants, co-working opportunities etc.
- Promote business resources and useful programs for small businesses to the community, including succession planning, employment resources, workshops, etc.
- Marketing Summerland as a destination, and great place to live, not just a stop along the highway.

No Response Given – 11%. The business owner was either not available, or did not have any outstanding concerns with the management, development or marketing of the individual business or the community.

Affordable Housing – 5%. This category included responses that indicated the need for increased housing in Summerland, along with more affordable housing options, including rentals. This partners with the section on attracting skilled workers and families to the area, as one cannot be sustainable without the other.

Adjust rental prices – 5% . A few businesses felt that they are being charged rent that is disproportionate to what they are being given in regards to space or location.

City Infrastructure – 3%. This category included items such as water rates, road conditions, the need for improved traffic lights, commercial zoning issues and lack of industrial and commercial space.