

## 2015 **Summerland** Business Walk Report



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

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## 2015 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, October 22nd, Summerland Chamber of Commerce Board members teamed up with Mayor Waterman and District of Summerland Councillors and CAO to conduct our first Summerland Business Walk.

Seven teams met with 66 businesses face-to-face. In order to reach even more businesses the same questions asked in person were also sent out to Summerland Chamber of Commerce business members via an eblast. An additional 49 businesses responded in the online survey. 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 first 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.

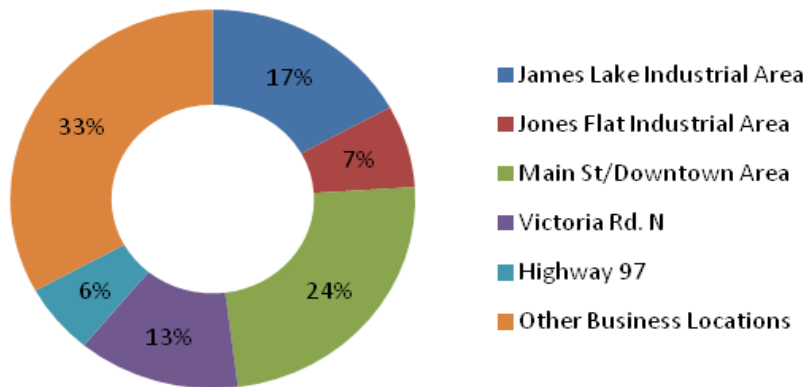
The information contained in this report summarizes what was learned from these visits and the online responses. If you did not have the opportunity to respond in this year’s Business Walk and survey, we look forward to having your input in the next event.

Kelly Marshall  
President,  
Summerland Chamber of Commerce

## Who Responded?

In total 115 businesses participated in the Business Walk survey, either face-to-face or through the online survey. The participants were drawn from many different business areas in Summerland, ranging from the downtown core to the industrial parks (See Figure. 1). The “Other business areas” section includes home based businesses, consultants and businesses located in outlying areas.

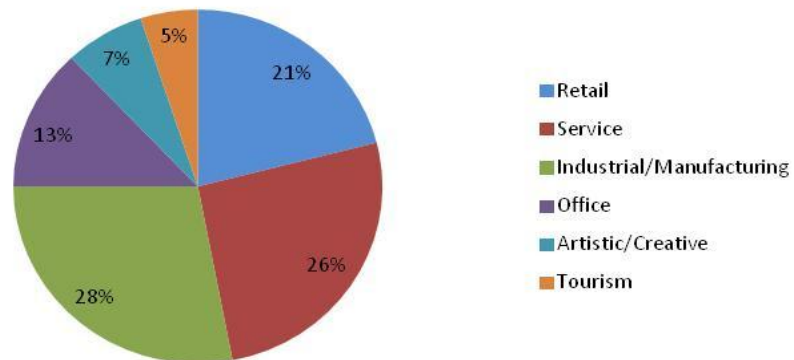
**Figure 1: Who Responded?**



## Industries Captured

A number of sectors were captured in the Business Walk survey, from retail and manufacturing businesses, to creative and service based companies, (See Figure. 2).

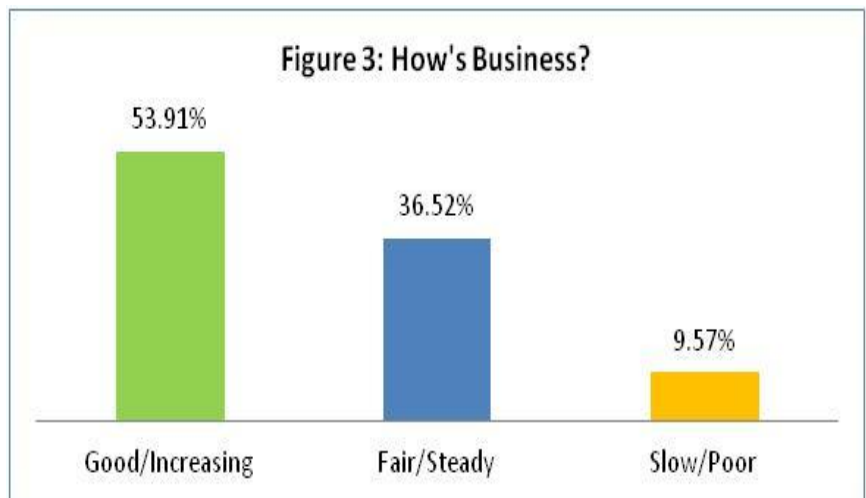
**Figure 2: Industries Captured**





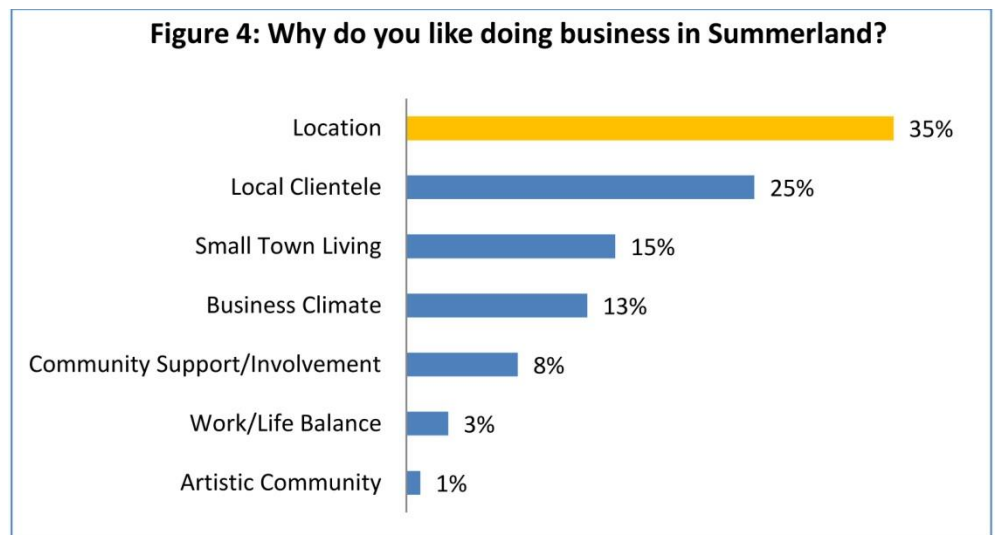
## How's Business

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 115 responses, 90.4% reported that they fell under the "Good/Increasing" or "Fair/Steady" categories with only 10.6% reporting that business was Slow/Poor.



## Why do you like doing business here 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. "Location" was cited as the main reason most people enjoy owning businesses in Summerland.



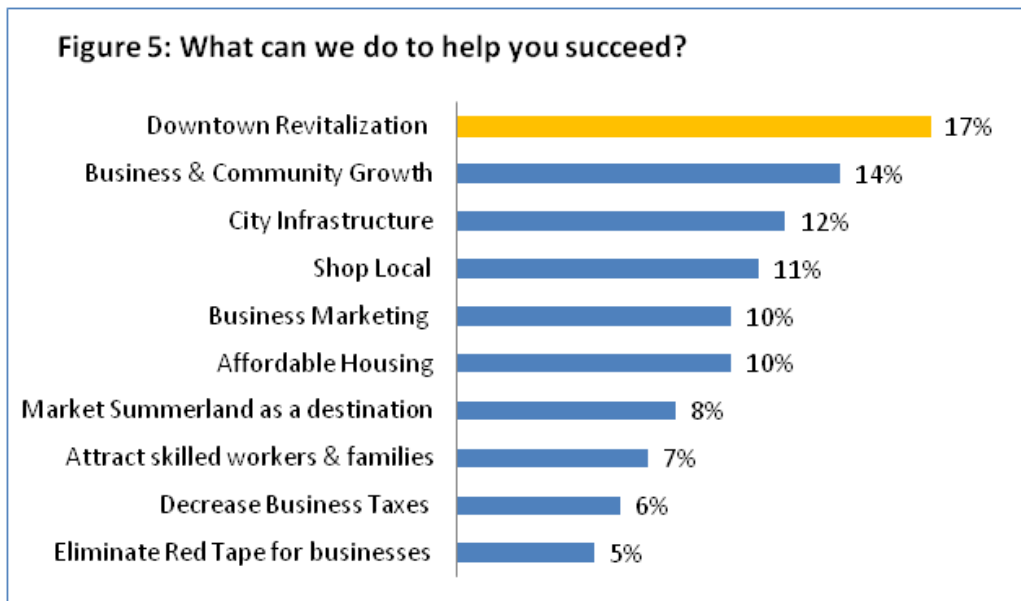
*"We have a great community; it's energetic, enthusiastic, and creative"*

*"Most beautiful location in Canada, with good, friendly clients who help expand our business by word of mouth along with many community minded folks looking out for each other!"*

*"I love that I live here, work here and play here. I take great pride in this community."*

*"Great customers, fantastic place to live and a strong business community"*

## 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. 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 “Downtown Revitalization”. It is important to note that this response came from businesses throughout the community, not just those in the downtown area.

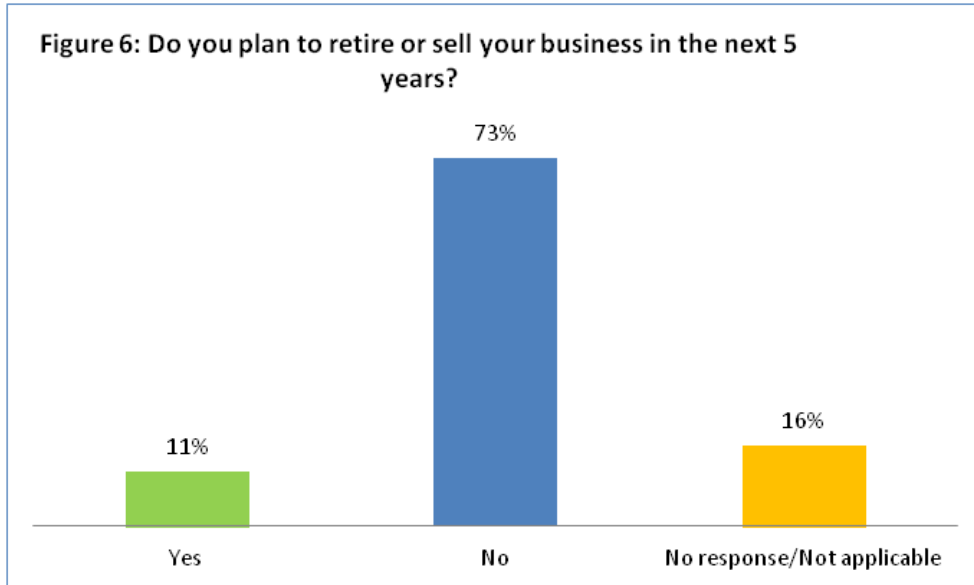
*“We need more people spending more money here to drive the economy - both residents and tourists”*

*“Pull people into downtown off the highway with more signage!”*

*“I would love to see a review of Bylaws to support Revitalization in the downtown area. Beautification is needed!”*

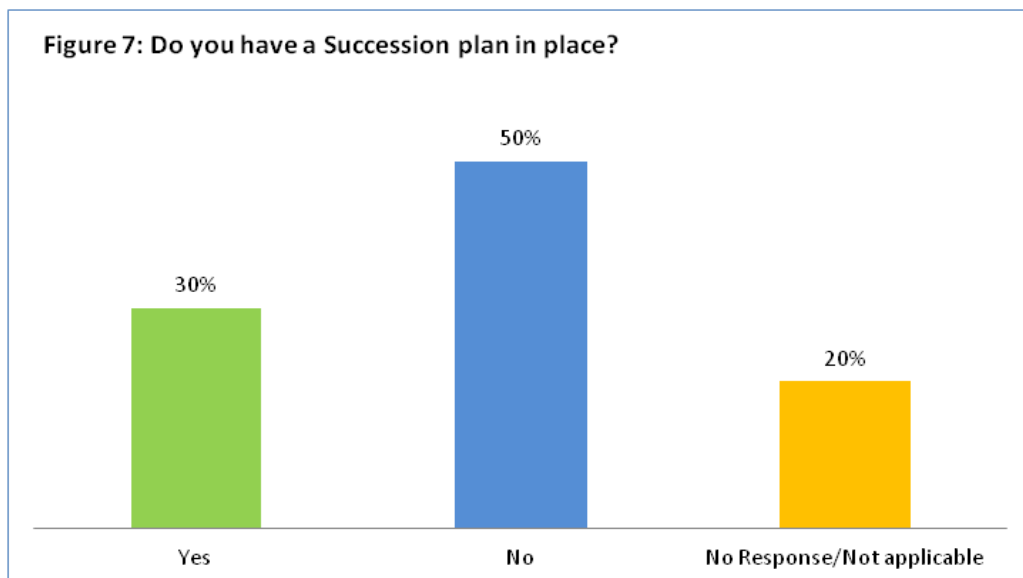
## Do you plan to retire or sell your business in the next 5 years?

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 10% 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 first 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 members 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 baseline from which future “Walks” will build.

## Acknowledgements

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

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The Chamber wishes to thank The District of Summerland’s Mayor, Council and CAO for participating in the 2015 Business Walk.



## **2015 Walking Teams**

Chamber President Kelly Marshall & Summerland Mayor Peter Waterman

Chamber VP Robert Hacking & Councillor Erin Trainer

Chamber Treasurer Kelsey Van Alphen & Councillor Doug Holmes

Director Christine Coletta & Councillor Janet Peake (Chamber Liaison)

Director Michael Hughes & Councillor Toni Boot (Chamber Liaison)

Director Erick Thompson & Councillor Erin Carlson

Chamber Executive Director Christine Petkau &

District of Summerland CAO Linda Tynan



## **Questions**

For questions regarding this report and the 2015 Business Walk, please contact:

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## Appendix.1

### Figure. 5

The question “What can be done to help your business thrive?” received a vast 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.

Downtown Revitalization – 15%. People directly stated that the downtown core needed to be revitalized or improved.

Business and Community Growth – 14%. This is a broad compilation of a few categories, including:

- The promotion of Summerland as a business friendly region to other communities – **61.4%** (8.6%)
- Creation of economic initiatives such as grants, co-working opportunities etc. – **24%** (3.3%)
- Promote business resources and useful programs for small businesses to the community, including succession planning, employment resources, workshops, etc.– **14.5%** (2%)

Percentages in **bold** are calculated based on the 14%. Percentages in regular font are based off the calculation of the entire data set.

City Infrastructure – 12%. 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.

Shop Local – 11%. A Shop Local campaign was highlighted as a necessity to increase business in Summerland, especially in the downtown business core.

Business Marketing – 10%. The responses in the category were based on the need for increased business marketing within the community. This entails ideas such as, having a community marketing person for various businesses, increased chamber marketing, improving their own business’s marketing strategies.

Affordable Housing – 10%. This category included responses that indicated the need for increased housing in Summerland, along with more affordable housing options, including rentals.

Market Summerland as a destination – 8%. Many businesses thrive on the tourism dollars that are brought to the area. This category documents those responses that feel Tourism initiatives need to be increased to market Summerland as a destination, not just a stop along the highway. For this reason, local Highway signage falls under this category.

Attract Skilled Workers and Families – 8%. These percentages of respondents feel that more needs to be done to attract a younger and more highly educated and trained demographic to Summerland.

Decrease Business Taxes – 6% . Many businesses feel that they are being taxed disproportionately to their business income, size or location. Comparisons were made between business taxes in Summerland versus other Okanagan communities.

Eliminate Red Tape for Businesses – 5%. This is a broad compilation of a few categories, including:

- Eliminating the amount of Red Tape/barriers to starting a business in town – **60%** (3%)
- Decreasing the amount of interference from the District – **20%** (1%)
- Increase knowledge of provincial barriers to starting a business, i.e, increase information about business regulations – **20%** (1%)

Percentages in **bold** are calculated based on the 5%. Percentages in regular font are based off the calculation of the entire data set.