


Business Retention and Expansion – Business Walks



economic
professional
development



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Manual Overview

The focus of this manual is on designing and implementing business walks as part of your overall Business Retention and Expansion Program which is designed to address the needs of existing local businesses. The primary objectives of business walks are:

- To get the pulse of the local business climate by identifying successes and obstacles that local businesses may be facing;
- Engaging Local Leaders, and external agencies, in the process of reaching out to the business community;
- Respond to those needs using a wide variety of services, such as technical assistance, workforce development, financing, and building new markets;
- Address local issues that detract from a healthy business climate in which local businesses can prosper and grow;
- Demonstrating to those that have already invested in your community that they are valued and appreciated.

A good business retention and expansion program will retain jobs and tax revenues within your community, foster the growth and development of local firms, and enhance your community's reputation as a good place in which to do business. This manual will guide you in creating a successful business walks initiative as part of a much broader business retention and expansion initiative.

While reference will be made to the BC BusinessCounts program throughout the manual, it should not be considered as a selling proposition but rather just one tool that is available to communities in BC. The important part of any Business Retention and Expansion Program is that you are building relationships with your local businesses, not what program you are using for data management.



Introduction

BCEDA has always placed importance on business retention and expansion programs and supporting those businesses already in a community. Business retention is best performed as a community-driven activity to maximize local development of existing industry. Each community or region develops its own approaches to conduct business outreach. The following information provides a brief overview of Business Retention and Expansion and one of the tools that BCEDA has made available to assist communities in running their program.

What is Business Retention and Expansion

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is an economic development strategy designed to identify actions to address issues and challenges and to capitalize on the opportunities offered by businesses already in your community. BRE focuses on the assets that you do have, rather than on ones that someone else has. Business retention and expansion is a core element of any economic development plan.

A BRE programs is designed to

- 1) Retain or keep existing businesses that have already made an investment in your community and provide employment; and
- 2) Provide assistance for businesses to expand.

Retention and expansion programs can be implemented at the local, regional and provincial levels in a variety of ways. When being implemented at the local and regional level, it is important to include provincial government agencies in the process as they offer a variety of programs that may be useful to some of your businesses. Some initiatives developed as part of a BRE program, like Business Walks, might focus on downtown areas or on the commercial and industrial areas where many small and medium-sized firms comprise a large portion of the employment base. Other programs may focus on allocating resources to support a specific industry or sector.

Business retention is applicable to all businesses in a community, from small mom-and-pop shops to large employers like manufacturers or headquarters. However generally most BRE efforts focus on those businesses that have the potential to provide the most impact, positively or negatively. There are two main goals of business retention: to provide assistance with issues that could force a company to fail and subsequently close, and to prevent companies from relocating to a new community. Business expansion refers to assisting businesses in their efforts to grow. Helping a business expand may mean helping it find a larger property to accommodate future



operations, helping it through the maze of approval processes, or helping it find or train new workers.

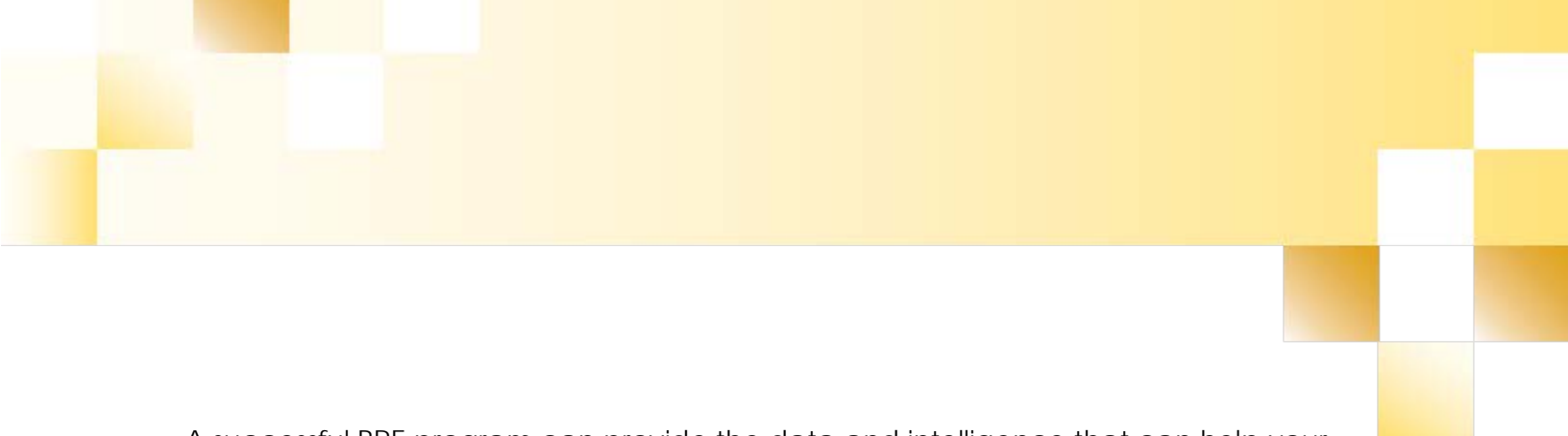
While the retention of large businesses is certainly critical given the number of jobs and amount of tax revenues that could be lost, small and medium-sized businesses should not be ignored. It has become well recognized that small businesses are the innovators and job generators of tomorrow. In terms of new business development, many of these opportunities are generated by existing firms that spin off startups. These are not new startups, and instead are labeled as expansion startups. In addition, growing businesses are more likely to stay in your community if you have helped them in achieving their growth and to which they are well connected. BRE programs play a critical role by building relationships of trust and encouragement to local businesses to remain in the community and continue to grow.

The retention and expansion of local businesses can:

- Keep or increase local jobs;
- Preserve or increase the local tax base;
- Increase local property values;
- Enhance the image/increase confidence of a local community or region as a place to invest;
- Maintain or diversify the economic base.

A formal BRE program identifies the hurdles and challenges facing local businesses and provides assistance to address those issues. Technical assistance provided through a BRE program can help a business:

- Increase its competitiveness in the wider marketplace (e.g., introduction to BC Trade and Investment representatives);
- Assist it with expansions that add new jobs (e.g., site selection assistance, working with local and regional government to ensure a smooth approval process);
- Keep it from relocating to other areas (e.g., identifying and resolving issues at the local level and helping businesses overcome certain challenges);
- Help it survive economic difficulties (e.g., business continuity planning, pre-disaster planning and post-disaster recovery help);
- Connect it to networks (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, BC Manufacturers and Exporters Association, industry associations, benefit programs, provincial and federal programs and agencies, angel investment networks, etc.).



A successful BRE program can provide the data and intelligence that can help your community in efforts to attract new companies and to foster the creation of new businesses. It can also supply the community with data on the local economy, such as:

- The competitive strengths and weaknesses of the area as a business location
- The relative strength of the local economy
- Areas of interest and concern that can be used to formulate public policy to improve the business climate (e.g. approval processes, zoning, etc.)
- An understanding of the current workforce and the workforce needs of the business community.

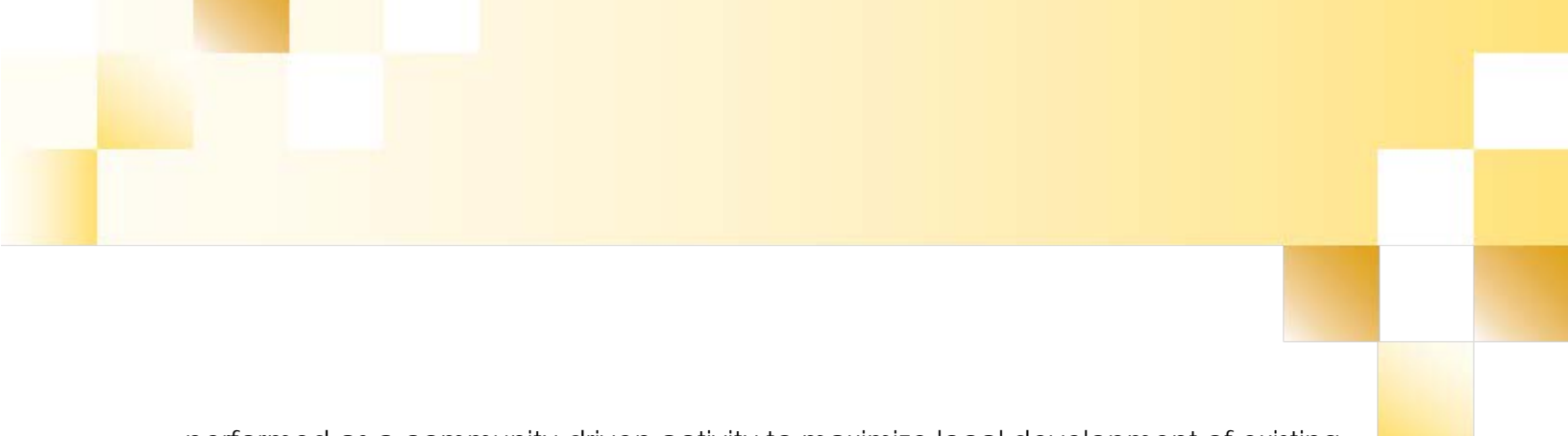
BRE surveys, company visits, focus groups, business walks, and other formal or informal data gathering techniques can provide economic development practitioners with a snapshot of their community's business climate. This data needs to be managed carefully because confidentiality is vital to many business owners. In addition, many key economic development metrics (e.g., jobs created, jobs retained, per capita income, level of investment, etc.) may be informed by a robust BRE program.

BC BusinessCounts

The British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA) first started the BC BusinessCounts program in 2010. The format was the first of its kind in Canada and has now been adopted by other Provinces. BC BusinessCounts provides a consistent province-wide method for gathering data needed to identify and analyze business needs at the local, regional and provincial level. To date over 40 groups, representing over 85 communities are using the BC BusinessCounts Program to identify the needs of local businesses and industry and to make their communities a better place in which to do business.

Following extensive research on business retention platforms, BCEDA purchased a provincial master license for ExecutivePulse. The ability for BCEDA to purchase this license was made available by both the Province of BC and BC Hydro who assisted in securing the necessary funding. ExecutivePulse web based CRM software is designed to collect and analyze data on existing industries with data collected by local agencies. A special licensing agreement enables BCEDA to make this software available to economic development organizations at prices substantially cheaper than normal. If your community is not part of the program, please feel free to contact BCEDA.

BCEDA has always placed importance on business retention and expansion initiatives and supporting those businesses already in a community. Business retention is best



performed as a community-driven activity to maximize local development of existing industry. Each community or region develops its own approaches to conduct business outreach. A robust CRM is an integral part of this approach.

Facts about BRE in BC

The BCEDA publishes a Member Survey every two years. In 2013 the survey demonstrated the following as it related to Business Retention and Expansion:

- 9.69% of the average economic development budget is spent on BRE programs and initiatives. This is the lowest of all budget categories.
- 21.16% of staff time is used to implement various BRE activities.
- Business Retention and Expansion emerged as the highest priority for BC communities with an average rating of 8.97% out of 10. This was substantially higher than any other category.

It was interesting to note that the category identified as the highest priority is also the one with the lowest budget allocation.

"How much time, resources and funding is your organization and community putting into this mainstay economic development strategy?" It may be time to look at these allocations and consider new initiatives to support what you already have.

Business Walks

Introduction to Business Walks

In 2010, the [Metro Chamber](http://www.metrochamber.org/business-walks.html)¹ in Sacramento, who is responsible for Sacramento Economic Development, launched the first Business Walks. Since then the program has grown across North America, including here in British Columbia.

In May of 2012, the [Central Okanagan Regional District](http://www.investkelowna.com/business-walks)², a member of BC BusinessCounts, piloted the very first Business Walks program in BC. Since that time the program in the Okanagan has expanded to two per year, one in the spring and one during Small Business Month. The one in the spring has been focused on the Manufacturing sector. During the initial Business Walks, more than 65 business and civic leaders participated by walking door to door and surveying 325 businesses.

For the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC), the information helps to capture and track the pulse of businesses throughout the region, connects business support agencies to the business community, communicates industry intelligence to business support providers and identifies opportunities for COEDC's Business Enhancement programming. Civic and business leaders are able to gain specific information that enables them to identify and remove barriers to doing business in their respective municipalities. Through the completion of a number of successful business walks, COEDC has developed a number of tools all designed to meet the needs of the business community, and based on the feedback gathered through the Business Walks process.

COEDC deserves all of the credit for establishing Business Walks in BC. BCEDA only played a minimal role in establishing the program by providing some input on the

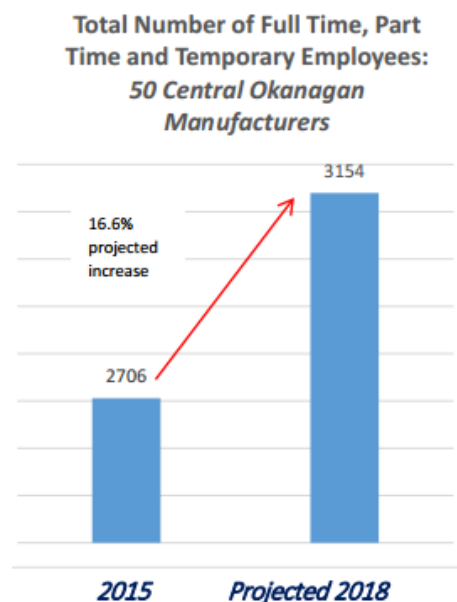
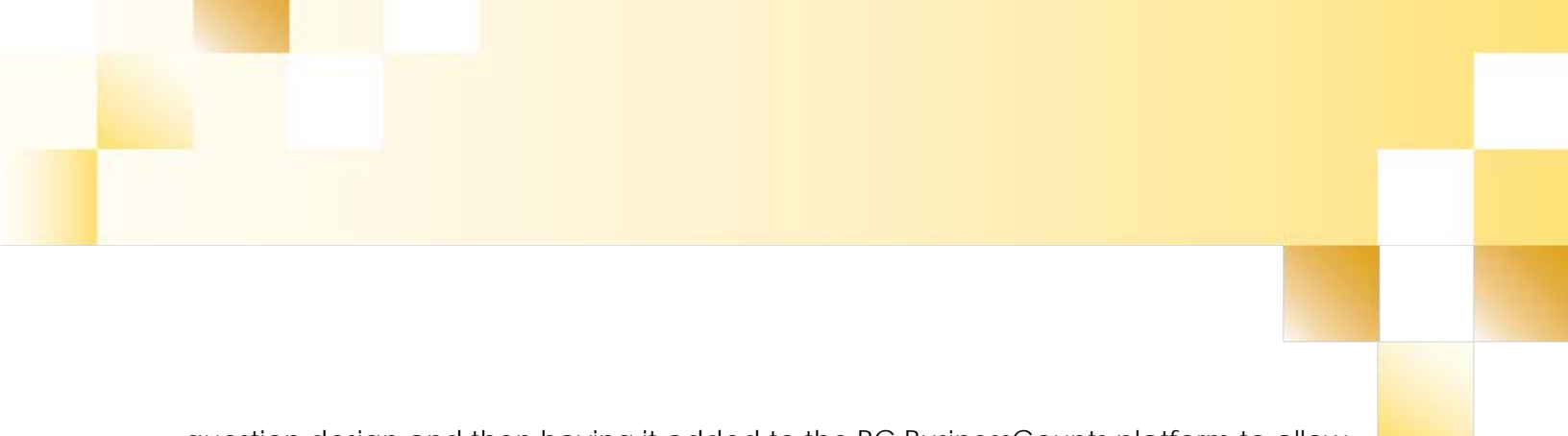


Figure 1 Results from Question 2: How many employees do you have today, and what is your projected number of employees in 3 years?

¹ <http://www.metrochamber.org/business-walks.html>

² <http://www.investkelowna.com/business-walks>



question design and then having it added to the BC BusinessCounts platform to allow for data entry and analysis. COEDC has graciously assisted many communities in establishing programs and has allowed BCEDA to share its story and materials developed for the program. Since the first Business Walks in BC, BCEDA has informed communities of COEDC's success and assisted in developing additional tools for Business Walks, including a specific survey used for retail business – Business Walks – Retail. All surveys are provided as examples in [Appendix A](#).

What are Business Walks and Why Do It?

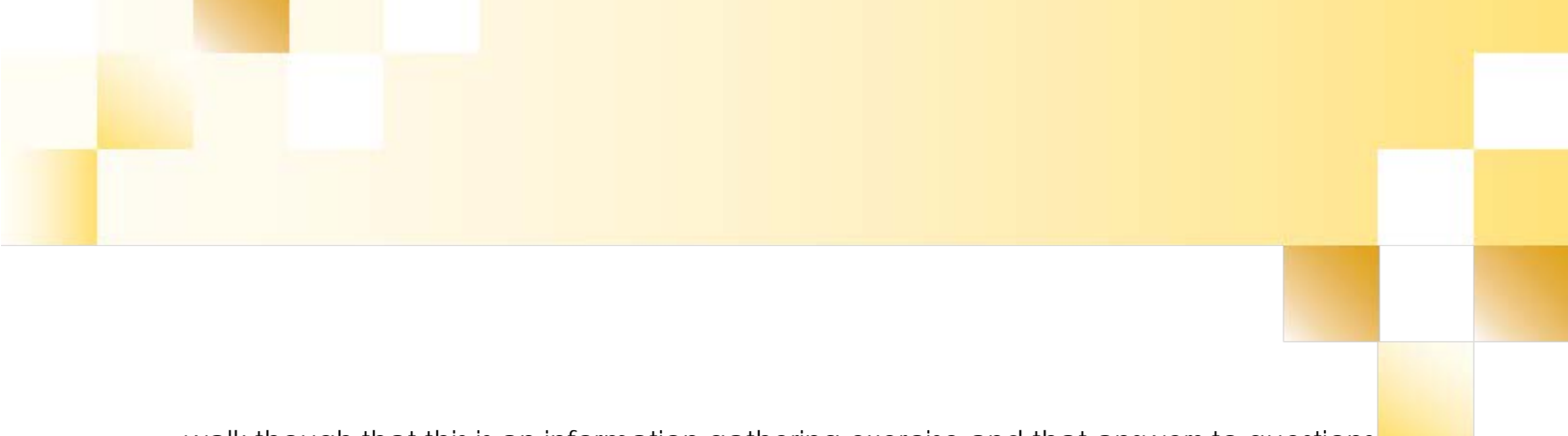
A “Business Walk” is a day dedicated to learning more about your local businesses through face-to-face interviews on their turf. Business Walks enables your community/region to cover much more ground than a traditional Business Retention and Expansion Program. Local leaders and key community stakeholders visit a large number of businesses with the hopes of gathering the knowledge they need to help their community and strengthen relationships. Consider a Business Walk the foundation of building relationships and networks over time. Ongoing events and reporting will help keep everyone up to date and inspired to foster a stronger business and friendlier business climate.

You are typically designing your Business Walks Program to:

- Understand the issues and opportunities of your existing business community
- Quickly diagnose firms on the brink of greatness or that may be at risk
- Build long lasting and effective working relationships between decision makers and local businesses
- Increase awareness of the programs and services offered by the community, economic development office, chamber of commerce, and other partners
- Recognize the impact and value that you place in your local businesses
- Identify those businesses that may require assistance
- Track the state of the local business community over time
- Provide local businesses with access to information that can help them grow and expand locally.

Establishing your Own Business Walks

The following information is provided to help you in developing, implementing and reporting out on your own Business Walks. No one community is the same, so this information should be only considered as a helpful guide and not a mandatory rule book on how you must run your program. It is important to remember throughout the



walk though that this is an information gathering exercise and that answers to questions or trying to resolve specific issues should be done during the “follow-up” phase.

Establish the Lead

Who from your community will serve as the “point person” for the “walk”? Typically this will be the economic development office. In some cases it may be a different local or regional government employee, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures or another agency responsible for economic development. It doesn’t make much difference, but it should be someone that represents the community at-large and has the means to rally troops and deploy resources.

The Leader is responsible for identifying and inviting local partners to be on the team, overseeing the development and implementation of the walk, preparing a report on the findings, and leading the process of providing follow up.

Establish the Business Walks Coordinating Committee

The “Business Walk” is a simple program, but it does require some planning. It’s important that the “Lead” have support in the coordination, implementation and the eventual follow up with identified businesses. The committee can be made up of partners (identified below), local elected officials, and key staff of the local and regional governments.

The committee is responsible for assisting with:

- Determining other key partners
- Assembling walking “teams” of 2-3 people to walk from business to business
- Asking the key questions during the walk
- Identifying the area(s) for the walk
- Developing the schedule and clear directions for the teams
- Developing a communications plan
- Developing a follow up plan for dealing with issues identified during the walk
- Assisting with the development of a final report
- Assisting where necessary with the follow up.

Establish Your Budget

Running a Business Walks program does not need to be a costly venture. Costs will depend on the what it is you decide to do and how many times per year you may do it. You may want to consider some of the following when developing a budget. Note some of these you may not do.

- Hosting a lunch/appetizers for the Team Members following the walk
- Hosting of a luncheon with businesses to present results
- Cost of printing (surveys and reports), paper, clipboards, pens, etc. for use on the day of the walk.
- License for BC BusinessCounts (if applicable)

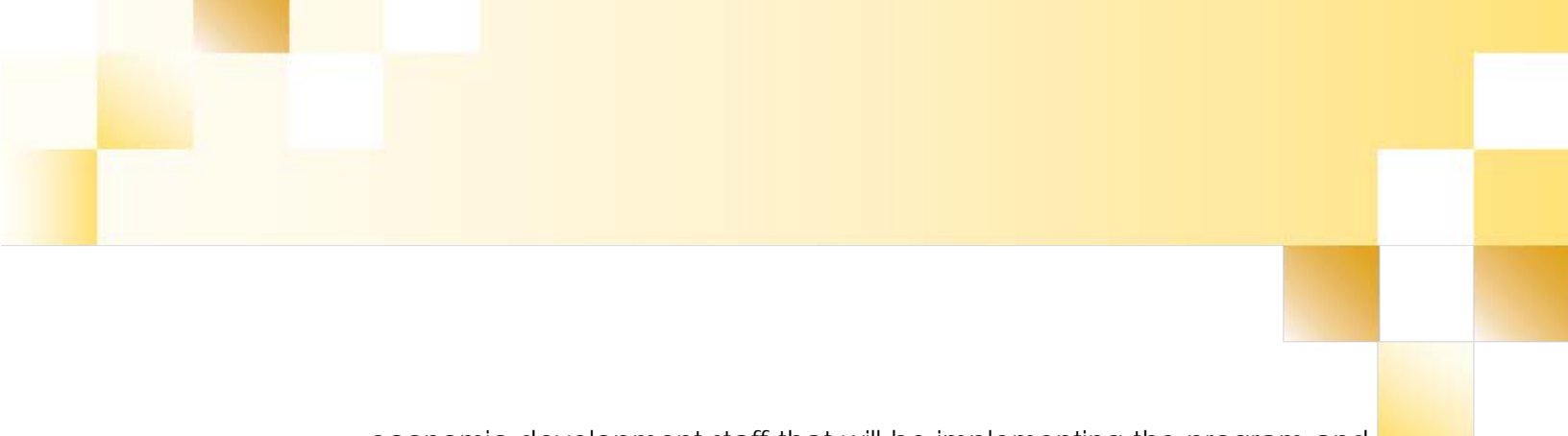
Finalize the Survey/Questions

The purpose of the survey is to help gather and organize the feedback collected on the Business Walk. Since the intent is to visit as many businesses as possible and to identify those businesses that may need additional assistance, the survey is typically very short. Examples of the Business Walks Surveys can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Identify Partners/Walking “Team” Members

As with any Business Retention and Expansion Program, a variety of key partners should be identified that can be part of the program both during the event and then also as key follow up partners once you have completed the walk. The following only summarizes some of the partners and teams that you may consider for inclusion in the “Walk.”

- **Mayors/Councils/Regional District Directors/First Nation Leaders:** One of the key benefits of Business Walks is the engagement of local leaders in an economic development activity. Local Leaders, whether it is Mayors, Councillors, Regional Directors, or First Nations Chief and Councils, all have the responsibility of making decisions that can impact local businesses – either negatively or positively. Engaging them in the walk allows them to be better informed when making decisions.
- **Municipal/Regional/First Nation Staff:** Staff of all levels of government play a key role in setting direction. Just like with the leaders, it is important that staff is aware of the issues and opportunities of the business communities when making recommendations to respect councils and boards.
- **Economic Development Staff and Committees:** While typically it is the



economic development staff that will be implementing the program and be the lead agency involved, it is an excellent opportunity to include committee members in a program that is taking up staff time. The walk is an excellent opportunity to educate on what the economic development department does and to hear what kind of economic development services would be helpful for the business community.

- ***Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade:*** Chamber of Commerce and Boards of Trades offer a variety of services for business. They are seen as key community partners on creating and promoting a strong local business climate.
- ***Business Improvement Associations (BIA):*** BIA's play a key role in many communities throughout BC. They are generally responsible for program development in downtowns or other designated areas. It is important to include them in the program and in many cases, the walk may take place in the area for which they have responsibility. They offer a variety of programs depending on community and identified needs.
- ***Community Futures:*** Community Futures play a key role in supporting economic development throughout British Columbia. They offer a variety of programs and services and potential loans.
- ***Regional Trusts:*** Regional Trusts have been established throughout BC. While the mandate is different for each trust, they play a key role in providing funding to support the local and regional economy.
- ***University, Colleges and Schools:*** Worker shortages can be a reason for existing businesses to relocate elsewhere. Including educational institutions can mitigate a shortage of talent. It is important to include educational institutions at all levels to allow for the development of a variety of programs. For example it might be wise to include the local high school business program director, career councillor, or apprenticeship director so that they can hear what the needs of local businesses are and they can help to direct students in to various careers. Local Universities and Colleges can perhaps adapt or add programs to help overcome skills shortages.
- ***Workforce Development Agencies:*** A number of agencies have been established throughout BC in order to assist in workforce development and placement of those looking for jobs. The Walk will be a great opportunity



for them to hear the needs of business.

- **Provincial Government:** The Province of BC, through the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, has a number of Regional Managers throughout the Province. The Regional Staff can help introduce businesses to potential programs during the follow up process. During the Walk, it will allow Provincial Staff and potentially MLA's an opportunity to hear firsthand the issues and opportunities available in the community or region.
- **Other:** You know your community best.

Setting the Date

Every community has several organizations that host events throughout the year. It can make it very difficult to find a date that can work for all partners but it is important to host the walk when as many business, leaders and support agencies can participate. It may be possible in some cases to host the event at the same time as another one as a complimentary initiative. British Columbia, like other Provinces in Canada, hosts an annual Small Business Month celebrating the important contributions entrepreneurs and businesses make to the BC economy and to their local communities. This would be a good time to recognize the value of your business community by hosting the walk. Once you arrive on a date, get the word out to the community, especially to the businesses you hope to meet with.

Planning Your Walk

Once you have established your [team](#), have a meeting to discuss the resources you'll need to make your "business walk" a success. Here are some things to consider:

- **Walking Teams:** How many people will you need to effectively meet and speak with each of your businesses in a day? Typically, teams of (2 or 3) people are given a certain number of businesses to meet with, within a designated timeframe. One person is identified as the "primary walker" the other as the secondary walker. The "primary walker" is responsible for initiating conversation, shaking hands and asking the questions. One of the other team members should be the "scribe" to make sure you document what is being heard. All team members should be encouraged

to thank the businesses, and ask questions for clarification. Remember the visit time in a business is generally only about ten minutes.

- **Schedule:** There are several things to consider for the day. *What works well for your business owners? What works well for the media? And, what works well for your team?* Make sure that the emphasis remains on the business owners. The “business walk” is meaningless without their participation. If needed, divide up the area/community into morning and afternoon walks and use the lunch hour to meet and compare notes.
- **Press:** Make sure the local newspaper, radio and other media outlets are aware of your event. If possible, have someone follow a team to take pictures and document the day. However, do not allow media to participate in an interview or take photos without the permission of the business owner.
- **Gifts:** Show your appreciation to your businesses. If you have the resources, leave them a gift, a business card, or some literature on how you plan to use the information provided. Some communities bring gift bags that include gift cards and educational materials for local businesses.



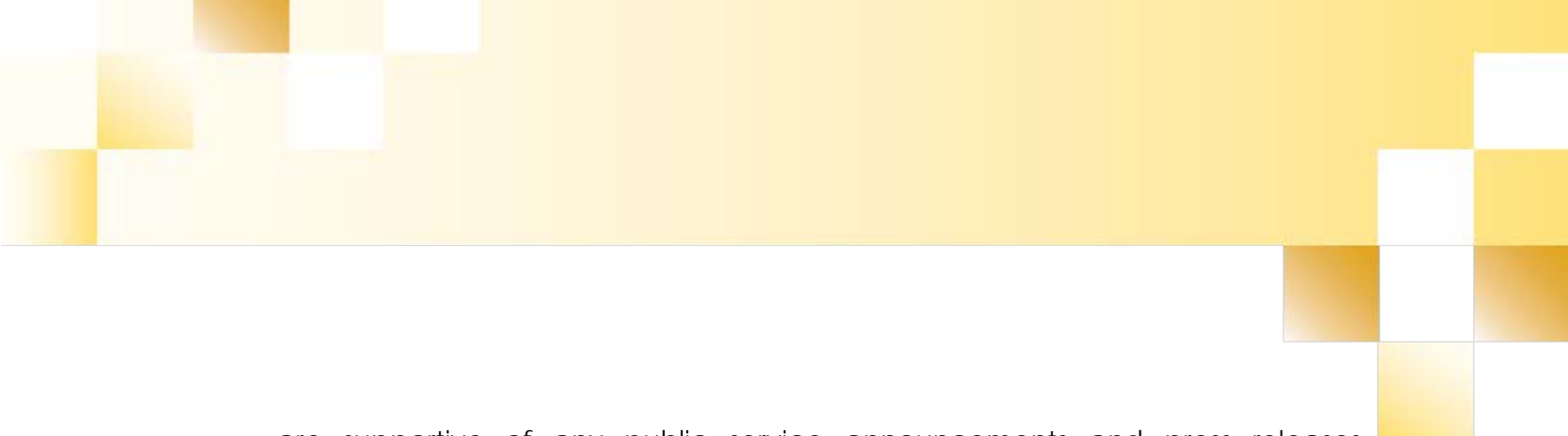
Figure 2: Sample only. Insert Partner Logos on back of business card.

Confidentiality

It is important to stress not only to the committee and walking team members but to businesses as well that all information collected will remain confidential and only reported out in an aggregate format. Talking publically or even in private settings, about what you hear from an individual business can destroy your chances on getting them to open up and talk in the future.

Talk it Up

Once you have determined that you are doing the Business Walks, and your partners are confirmed, the coordinating team needs to develop a communication plan to create awareness about the program and when it will occur. It may be helpful to include the owners/managers of the local media (radio station, newspaper, cable station) in the team efforts to ensure that they



are supportive of any public service announcements and press releases. Furthermore, the team may want to make one person on the team responsible for the implementation of the communication plan.

A Business Walks communication plan should include three parts:

Announcing Business Walk Day: In order to orchestrate a successful Business Walks program, the team may want to announce the event during a Chamber of Commerce luncheon with the Media present. During the launch you should explain why you are doing it, when it will be held, who the team members are, and how you will manage the release of the findings (emphasizing the confidentiality of individual business information).

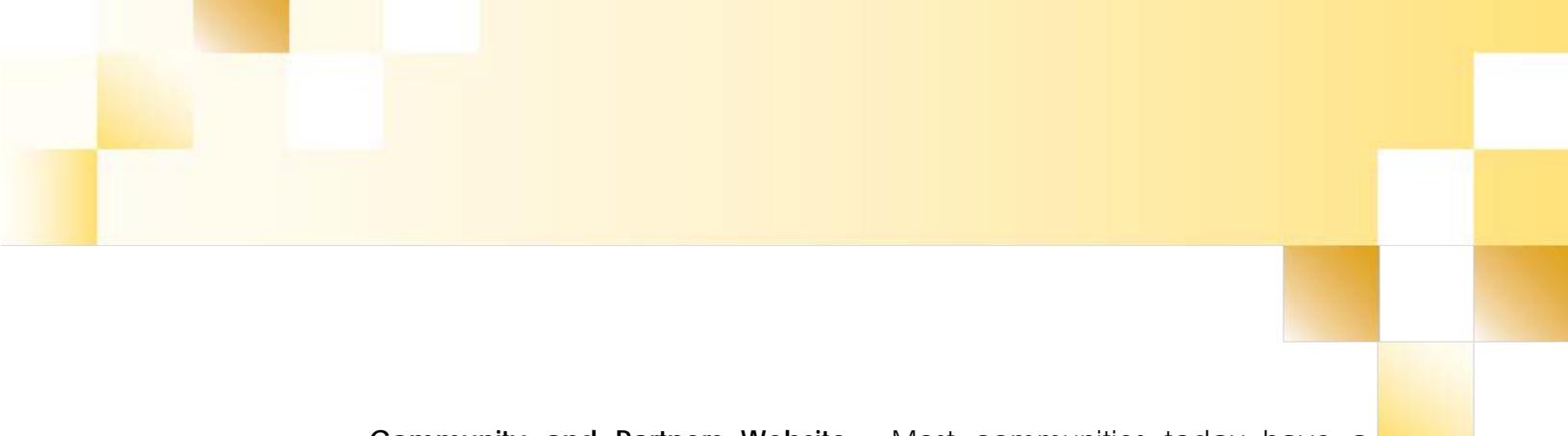
Regular Communications and Updates: Leading up to the day that the Business Walks will be held, the team should distribute reminders through its networks and through the media. Talk about new partners, an example of some of the questions, the area(s) of the community being visited, etc.

Highlight Positives from the Walk: In order to create buy in for additional business walks in the future and perhaps establishing a more comprehensive Business Retention program, it is important to communicate highlights from the day. Talk about perhaps some future steps based on the findings, potential expansions or jobs, or new resources that support business development. This is all in addition to the distribution of your final report.

To implement the business walks communication strategy, there are a number of communication tools at the team's disposal. These include:

Newspaper: Good relationships with the newspaper editors ensure that press releases can be placed quickly and effectively. You may want to have them interview selected businesses following the business walk – but only with explicit permission.

Radio Station: The team negotiates with the radio stations to run public service announcements or conduct interviews with members of the team for local programming. It is important to keep in mind that different radio stations serve different markets even within a small community. You may want to have them interview selected businesses following the business walk – but only with explicit permission.



Community and Partners Website: Most communities today have a website that is used to talk about existing services and programs. The site can be used to talk about the business walk. In addition, all of your other partners will likely have their own websites that can be used.

Business Newsletter: Most communities and organizations distribute newsletters. The team can use their own newsletters to increase awareness of the walk and to highlight results and next steps. Many times the distribution lists will be much larger than just the community and this can help to increase awareness of how the community values local businesses.

Social Media: Social Media is a very useful tool in increasing awareness of the program. Someone should however manage the use of the Social Media in order to address any negative comments that may be made. Typical Social Media used for a business walk may include Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

An example of a communications plan, originally prepared by the Central Okanagan Regional District, and modified by BCEDA with permission can be found in [Appendix B](#).

The Walk

You have made it to the day of the Walk. The walking teams are gathered and ready to head off to their assigned areas with their team members. Several things to be aware of when you hit the streets with your teams.

- **Pre Walk Gathering:** Start your “walk” off with a meeting with all walking team members before they head out. Stress why you are doing it, how to ask the questions, assignment of areas, importance of confidentiality, and other details of the day.
- **The Team:** The teams have been established with two or three members.
- **Visiting the Business:** Each visitor should look around the business if time permits while waiting for the owner or manager. Look for awards, and other materials that may provide a reason for the primary walker to congratulate or provide some positive feedback during the brief discussion and welcoming comments. The primary walker will start the discussion with each businesses and introduce the rest of the team. He/She will then start asking the predetermined questions while one of the team members, who is the “scribe” will document the answers. Collect a

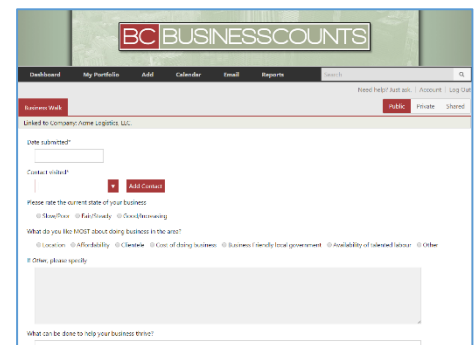
business card from the owner or manager so you know who you talked to and who to follow up with. All team members are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions and provide some general comments (but not responses to answers given). Photos can be taken with the team and the business owner or manager if permission is given.

- **Completion of the Business Walk:** Once the teams have completed the visits in the assigned areas they should converge back to the original determined location. Completed Surveys and Business Cards collected should be provided to the Lead.
- **Thank You Event:** A nice touch will be to finish the Walk off with a thank you lunch or snacks and to allow for the exchanging of findings. This should be done on the same day as the walk.

Entering the Data

Once the walk has been completed, the data needs to be entered and then summarized for a report. A list also needs to be developed of the businesses identified that need additional assistance. If you are using BC BusinessCounts to enter your data this can be done using the following easy steps:

1. Log In
2. Select Add
3. Click on the appropriate app/widget for either "Business Walks Survey" or "Business Walks Retail Survey"
4. Link the survey to a company
5. Enter the data
6. Select whether the company needs to be revisited.
7. Save and Complete.

The screenshot shows the BC BusinessCounts web interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Dashboard', 'My Profile', 'Add', 'Calendar', 'Email', and 'Reports'. Below this, a 'Business Walk' section is visible, showing a form to 'Link to Company Name (optional, LLC)'. The form includes fields for 'Date submitted?' and 'Contact info?'. There's a red 'Add Company' button. Below the button, there's a section for 'Please rate the current state of your business' with radio buttons for 'Great/Good', 'Fair/Okay', and 'Good/Better'. Another section asks 'What do you like MOST about doing business in the area?' with radio buttons for 'Location', 'Affordability', 'Climate', 'Cost of doing business', 'Business-friendly local government', 'Availability of talented labor', and 'Other'. A text area for 'Other, please specify' is provided. At the bottom, there's a field for 'What can be done to help your business thrive?'.

If your community is using an Excel spreadsheet or another system make sure that it is easy to run reports in an aggregate format in order to protect confidential information.

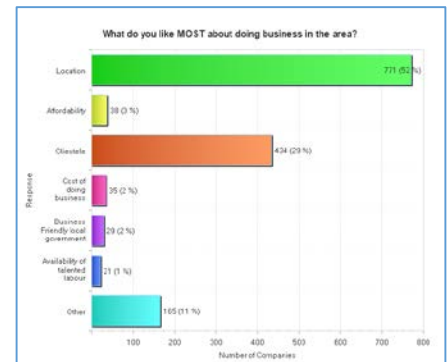
The entering of data needs to occur immediately following the walk. It is important to prepare the report and begin the process of following up with the identified businesses.

Preparing the Report

Once you have finished your Business Walk, and have entered the data you will need to generate a brief report that you will share with partners and businesses.

The report should contain the following:

- Purpose of Business Walk
- How it was done
- Summary of the responses to each question
- Summary of common themes
- Number of follow-ups to be completed and with the different kinds of assistance that is being provided (remember confidentiality)
- Acknowledgements and lists of different resources that businesses can access.
- Next Steps



Several samples of reports produced in the Central Okanagan and Sacramento can be found in [Appendix C](#).

If you are a user of BC BusinessCounts/Executive Pulse, you can easily download the data entered into a report that can be printed or exported to various file formats like PowerPoint, Excel, Word, etc.

Sharing the Results

It is important to share your report with your stakeholders, partners and the general public. You also should give special attention to including the local business owners who participated and even those that you may not have had the opportunity to visit during this Business Walk. The District of Squamish took a very innovative approach to including businesses in a full day of presentations on the findings of a much broader Business Retention and Expansion Program. The event was very successful and appreciated by the businesses that participated. The community highlighted the findings and then focused on the recommendations and next steps that were being taken to overcome issues. A similar shorter event could be arranged to highlight the results of the business walks including perhaps presenting at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon and/or a Rotary meeting.

Follow up

One of the primary objectives of a Business Walks program is to build strong relationships. Failing to take action based on the outcomes of your “walk” can result in even further damage and mistrust. Businesses have taken the time to tell you about an issue that they may be having and if you do not follow up they likely will not be willing to share again in the future. Communities using the full BC BusinessCounts tool can use the referral and action item options to dealing with the issues and tracking them through to completion. If you do not have access to the tool then you should develop a detailed process that allows you to monitor the follow up with businesses.

Some examples of specific follow up include:

Workforce Issues: Many companies may be facing issues related to workforce. The following are only examples of the types of assistance that may be offered and who may help provide a solution (should not be considered a complete list):

Workforce Issue Assistance	Possible Assistance Provided by
Development of Special Training Programs	Local College and Universities
Funding to Support Apprenticeship Training	Province of BC
Student Skill Development	Local School Districts/High School
Local/Regional Job Fairs	Economic Development Office, Local Government, Universities and Colleges, Industry Associations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
Employer does not have a benefit plan and would like one	BCEDA, Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations

Exporting Opportunities: Some manufacturers, or other types of business may have an opportunity to begin exporting or are having problems in certain markets.

Export Issue Assistance	Possible Assistance Provided by
Looking to begin exporting	Community Futures, Province of BC Trade and Investment Representatives, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, etc.
Export Financing	Local Lending institutions, Export Development Canada, Canadian Commercial Corporation, DFAIT (referrals), etc.

Market Assistance	Province of BC Trade and Investment Representatives and Sector specialists, DFAIT
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Succession Planning: It is estimated that well in excess of 80% of businesses do not have a formal succession plan in place.

Succession Planning Issue	Possible Assistance Provided by
Desire to establish a success plan (and have requested some assistance)	Community Futures, Local Accounting firms, Chamber of Commerce
Need to establish a succession plan (trend identified but no specific request for assistance)	Community Futures, Local Accounting firms, Chamber of Commerce – hosting of special seminar on succession plan

Local Permitting and Licensing: It is not uncommon to hear concerns expressed about local permitting and licensing. In many cases nothing can be done but sometimes you will find ones that you can provide specific assistance in getting results.

Local Permitting and Licensing Issue	Possible Assistance Provided by
Length of time to get a building permit approved	Local Planning Department or CAO
Difficulty with signage enforcement	Bylaw Enforcement Officer or CAO
Ministry of Transportation won't respond to my request to provide a "blue" sign directing people to my business	Province of BC JTST Regional Manager



Conclusion

It is important to remember that one size does not fit all. Your “Business Walks” may look totally different than a neighboring community. You need to design your “Walk” to fit the resources available in your community. You may decide that you need to hold more than one a year in order to get a good cross section of the economic sectors in your community. It is okay to be creative in designing a program that meets your needs and the needs of your partners.

Several Economic Development Offices in BC have not completed successful Business Walks and can act as a resource for you in designing your own. Do not be afraid to reach out and ask for input.

If you have questions or would like to discuss certain aspects of the program please feel free to contact the British Columbia Economic Development Association and they will do their best to answer the question or find someone that can. Good Luck!

Dale Wheeldon, President and CEO
British Columbia Economic Development Association
dwheeldon@bceda.ca



Appendix A – Business Walk Surveys

The following two surveys are only samples. Most typical Business Walks programs focus on three key questions:

- Please rate the current state of your business?
- What do you like most about doing business in the area?
- What can be done to help your business thrive?

In British Columbia, we have adopted additional questions that could be asked as part of the Business Walk. In 2014, working with Kevin Poole from the City of Vernon, we also developed Business Walk Retail Survey, which to our understanding is the first one developed in North America.

BUSINESS WALK

Date submitted*

Contact visited*

Please rate the current state of your business

☐ Slow/Poor ☐ Fair/Steady ☐ Good/Increasing

What do you like MOST about doing business in the area?

- ☐ Location
- ☐ Affordability
- ☐ Clientele
- ☐ Cost of doing business
- ☐ Business Friendly local government
- ☐ Availability of talented labour
- ☐ Other

If *Other*, please specify

What can be done to help your business thrive?

What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

- ☐ Exporting
- ☐ Financing
- ☐ Hiring/Human Resources
- ☐ Business planning
- ☐ Supply chain development
- ☐ Succession Planning
- ☐ Other

If *Other*, please specify



Business Walk Survey

Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes within

☐ 30 days ☐ 60 days ☐ 90 days

Business walk notes

BUSINESS WALK RETAIL SURVEY

Date submitted*

Contact visited*

Please rate the current state of your business.

☐ Slow/Poor ☐ Fair/Steady ☐ Good/Increasing

What is the average number of employees (FTE's) including yourself (or owner)

What do you like about doing business in the area?

- ☐ Available local services
- ☐ Availability of labour
- ☐ Business friendly local government
- ☐ Clientele
- ☐ Cost of doing business
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Other

If *Other*, please specify

What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

- ☐ Financing
- ☐ Finding employees
- ☐ Lack of customers
- ☐ Lack of space
- ☐ Local property taxes
- ☐ Local restrictions
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Other

If *Other*, please specify

What can be done to help your business thrive?

What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

- ☐ Business planning
- ☐ Financing
- ☐ Labour support programs
- ☐ Locations for expansion
- ☐ Succession Planning
- ☐ Other

If *Other*, please specify

ASSESSMENT

Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes when

☐ Immediately ☐ Within 30 days ☐ More than 30 days

Provide a legible, brief description of company's need, e.g. Why are you suggesting a follow up visit?

Appendix B – Communications Plan

As discussed on Page 15, in order for your “business walk” to be a success, you’ll need to spend time marketing it. The purpose of your marketing efforts is three-fold:

1. To generate positive “buzz” to encourage participation by emphasizing how you will use the information gathered.
2. To promote local businesses’ role in supporting the local economy.
3. To promote local leadership’s role and commitment to strengthening local businesses.

It is good to let your business owners know what to expect before the walk occurs. Share with them the purpose of the “business walk”, how you intend to use the results of the “business walk”, and if you want you can let them know what the simple questions are so they are not intimidated.

Some methods you may want to consider:

- **Traditional Media:** Newspaper, radio, utility bills, and newsletters.
- **Electronic Media:** Facebook, websites, Twitter, and electronic newsletters.

An example of a communications plan, originally prepared by the Central Okanagan Regional District, and modified by BCEDA with permission can be found in Appendix B.



Sample Communications Plan

Original development by the Central Okanagan Regional District. Modified by BCEDA with permission.

Why Do I Need A Communications Plan?

A communication plan acts as proactive measure to ensure that everyone has the right information in a timely manner. The plan can also describe what information will be shared and how it will be distributed. The plan can also identify goals, target audience, key messaging and a timeline for rollout.

Business Walks Communications Strategy

1. Communications Infrastructure

[A detail of the communications capacity– staff & time? Who will do the work?]

Example: Staff to develop all internal & external messaging. Partners asked to assist in delivery through their networks e.g. board communications, newsletters, social media & direct contact to clients.

2. Goals

[A place to describe why the communication efforts are being launched in the first place. In this area, be sure to describe what you want to do]

Example:

- *Gather intelligence to help businesses grow*
- *Prepare businesses to receive volunteer walkers*
- *Create a 'buzz' about the Business Walks pilot project*
- *Create awareness about the organization & its programs*
- *Create awareness about business service providers in the region e.g. chambers, CFDC, Province of BC, BIA, etc.*
- *Identify businesses which require one-on-one assistance e.g. expansion plans, lay-offs, diversification etc.*
- *Facilitate linkages between the business community, municipalities, regional districts, first nations*

3. Target Audience

[In this space, define who you are trying to reach with your messaging and what you need to know about them]

Example:

- *Businesses in Central Okanagan (targeted areas) - Consideration(s):*
- *Most businesses in identified zones are retail, restaurant, financial and legal services & primarily operated with 0-5 employees.*



4. Message

[The messaging described in this space will be the key calls-to-action for your initiative]

Example:

"The {your organization} working in partnership with_{list partners} is gathering intelligence to help businesses grow"

Additional Messaging:

- **Problem** – Cities are perceived to be weakly connected to business community. "Lack of business friendly environment"
- **Solution** – Connect with as many businesses as possible to facilitate dialog
- **Action** – Improve understanding of opportunities and challenges facing business – 'pulse of the business community'. Identify businesses requiring follow up assistance

5. Hook/Teaser(s)

[Create a teaser in subject line of your press release & other communications to get the reader to want more]

Example:

- "Did you know a dog groomer can help a tech start-up?"
- "Who knew businesses could help other businesses"
- "How Can"

6. Spokesperson

[Who are the best individuals/messengers to help reach target audience with your messaging?]

Example:

- Staff as assigned
- Lead Partner Organizations

7. Communications Channels & outlets

[In this section, describe how you intend to reach your target audience]

Example:

- Press releases distributed to media channels & business networks
- Social media (Your organization, Chambers, BIA, CF, etc.). Create Facebook and Twitter Accounts to talk about the walk (ie:@yourcommunitybusinesswalk)
- Local champions (Board, Chambers, BIA, CF, etc)
- Presentations at chamber lunches, rotary, etc)

8. News Media

[Rank and list the top 10-15 outlets you want coverage in and identify the reporter from each outlet whom you want to target]

Example:

- Newspaper/TV station #1: Name of Contact

9. Pitch Reporters

[Think about, and clearly articulate what you would like to pitch to the above reporters? Theme? Tagline / graphics?]

Example:

Answer questions of how this benefits the community – e.g. the leaders throughout {your community} are committed to supporting businesses.

- *5 minute conversation could result in saving a business*
- *Mayor, Council, Directors, and First Nation leaders 'hitting the streets' to support business*
- *Provide high res graphics to media with all press releases*
- *Tell media what you want – e.g. photos of volunteers walkers walking the streets etc.*

10. Deliverables / Collateral/Event

[What deliverables/collaterals /events are required to communicate with reporters? List the possible variety of information that would support your communication efforts]

Example:

- *Date & Time of event(s)*
- *Key message(s)*
- *Art /logo, photos etc.*
- *Who will be in attendance – e.g. politicians*
- *What we expect – e.g. on event day photos of teams, mayors walking etc.*

11. Timeline

[The timeline clearly describes when the information will be rolling out to individuals and groups through your identified communication channels]

Example

- *See communications implementation timeline*
- *Track Coverage*
- *System to capture media hits?*
- *Staff to review newspapers (hard & electronic versions) and google alert sources throughout communication campaign*

12. Evaluation

[The post-event evaluation of your communications strategy is a key component in learning what worked well and what did not. Use this information as an opportunity to learn from experience. Clearly state who will be facilitating the conversation and who will be participating]

Example:

- *Post event meeting to be facilitated by lead agency with project partners to evaluate program success & challenge*

13. Present Results

It is important to prepare a report demonstrating the findings in an aggregate format. Prepare a report and circulate to those that participated and perhaps host a luncheon or coffee to present the finds and report on next steps.



Appendix C – Sample Reports

The following Sample reports are from the Sacramento Metro Chambers very first Business Walks in 2010 and then the latest one. Following that is the first Business Walks report from the Central Okanagan Regional District in 2013. Both organizations have all of the reports produced from the walks available online.

The reports do not need to be long but need to summarize the findings.

BUSINESS WALK POST-EVALUATION SUMMARY

South Shore — November 4, 2010



In partnership with:



Supported by:



El Dorado County, Office of Economic Development, the City of South Lake Tahoe, TahoeChamber.org, Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan, Lake Tahoe Community College and the Sacramento Metro Chamber launched the inaugural South Shore business walk on November 4, 2010.

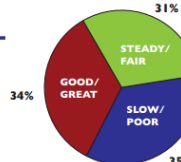
The Metro Pulse Business Walk Series is geared toward helping local businesses in specific areas pinpoint major successes, as well as any concerns the community may be having. The South Shore business walk allowed business and civic leaders to get a pulse of the local business climate and act promptly to provide any support that may be needed. The leaders will then be able to act on behalf of businesses in the community—small, medium and large—to promote the area's prosperity.

Volunteer walkers asked three basic questions of local business:

- How is business?
- What do you like about doing business in the area?
- What improvements are needed in the area?

During the South Shore business walk, 41 business and civic leaders visited 134 businesses; 125 of those businesses were available and willing to respond. The overall responses were positive—businesses reported that, year over year, they were able to remain at least steady or fair during these challenging economic times. South Shore businesses like their community, lifestyle and location and the clientele it attracts. To improve

FIGURE 1: HOW IS BUSINESS?



How is business?

In general, the South Shore business community is weathering the recession. Approximately two thirds of surveyed businesses (65 percent) indicated that business is at least steady or fair (Figure 1). A little more than one third (34 percent) actually said business was good or great, while 31 percent cited that they are at least steady or fair. Many companies acknowledged that sales numbers are seasonal. Numerous companies look forward to summer or winter, when tourism peaks in South

Shore. Thirty-five percent reported that their business was slow or poor. These responses were attributed to shifts in consumer spending, "shoulder seasons," downsizing and overall economic conditions and employee cuts. Several businesses acknowledged the need to take off their blinders and start thinking outside the box. Many of the respondents who stated that they are "just getting by" are hoping for a big winter and are thinking of ways to attract more foot traffic to their businesses.

What do you like about doing business in the area?

When asked what they like best about doing business in the South Shore area, 63 percent of respondents cited the area's community and clientele (Figure 2). People in South Shore love their community and many stated that they enjoy meeting people from all over the world. A large number say they have lived in this area their whole lives; they enjoy the small-town feel and the opportunity for regular customers. The local area businesses understand that they need to work together to keep their community moving forward. Many reported benefiting from word-of-mouth referrals between local businesses. They believe this has enhanced the area and allows them to build lasting relationships with many of their clients.

Location was the second most-mentioned response (30 percent). Many respondents stated that South Shore is their home and community—they have the ability to work, live and play "all in their own backyard." A lot of business people said they moved from the Bay Area and/or Southern California for "a life in the mountains." Respondents enjoy the rural landscape but like the close proximity to Sacramento and Reno. They believe the location provides great access to various amenities such as local schools, hotels, distinctive shops and restaurants.

Lifestyle was the third most-

mentioned response. Twenty-

percent of businesses

liked-back, easy-going

lifestyle as the reason they love living in South Shore. Many

scenery from the mountains to the lake evoke a "great sense of gratitude for life," according to several respondents. Residents and tourists alike are able to involve themselves in several outdoor activities such as canoeing, hiking, skiing and boating.

"Other" responses included these general comments:

- City of South Lake Tahoe offers valuable programs
- Historic area provides charm and character
- Low crime rate creates a sense of security

What improvements are needed in the area?

The South Shore business community is viewed as both a positive place to work and live based upon responses. That said, there is always room for improvement. In fact, five percent of respondents stated nothing needs improvement, appearing satisfied overall (Figure 3).

Marketing and events was the most frequently reported response when asked what could be improved in the South Shore area (44 percent). Many respondents feel that the surrounding area knows about the wonderful things South Shore has to offer but the rest of the country doesn't. Respondents cited a desire for more advertising and marketing, both domestically and internationally—their hope is to increase tourism volumes during off-peak seasons. Of those interviewed many are looking for

more exposure, accessibility and

affordability with respect to

local marketing and promotion

options for both their business

and the South Shore area.

Several cited the need for more

events, especially during non-

peak seasons. Some examples

include dog shows, team events,

concerts, cultural events and

arts exhibits. A large events

facility was also requested.

A few respondents requested more

community events to help

out local schools or charities

in the area and a campaign to

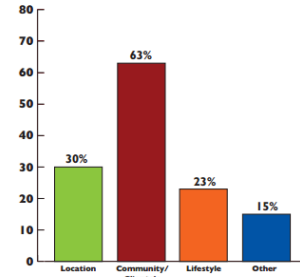
promote "Shop Local" awareness.

Government regulations

ranked second (27 percent)

on the improvements list.

FIGURE 2: WHAT DO YOU LIKE?



looking for "less government" interference as well as lower taxes to help keep companies afloat. Many companies being billed for various permits mentioned that, while they understand the reason for the permit, they feel the process to get them is tedious.

Redevelopment was the third most-cited response (17 percent). In particular, respondents expressed a desire for

redevelopment of the "Y." Many feel this area is the first thing

people see when they come to South Shore, and respondents

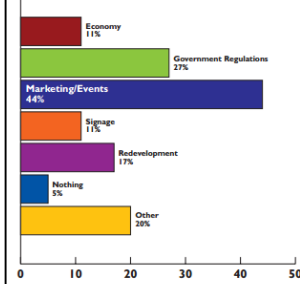
rules while companies located outside the city boundaries have another, creating a perceived loss in revenue. For those inside the city limits understand the necessity to keep Tahoe beautiful but feel that more common ground needs to be found. Many stated that they are worried people don't know where they are located without improved signage.

With respect to the economy, respondents want to see the creation of more jobs and that vacant stores are filled, as well as the availability of more lending options. They believe consumers are still traveling to South Shore, just not as frequently as in the past. They believe this change in consumer spending has hurt South Shore businesses. High gas prices are also a

major concern—"if gas is too high, tourists don't come." In addition, some respondents provided several "other" responses for improvements needed in the South Shore, including:

- More reliable bus service and dial-a-ride options
- Improvement district for the Meyers commercial area

FIGURE 3: WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?



want it "spruced up" to give South Shore a more refined look. A few cited a desire for more bike lanes, streetlights and better landscaping. Many are looking for an overall cleanup of various areas in South Shore because they believe it impacts consumer's decisions on where to shop. There is a need to turn old unused buildings into something great.

Business development was the fourth most-cited (15 percent) area for improvement. The local businesses are looking for business coaching programs, financial education programs, legal aid programs and advisory panel options. Businesses are also looking for project funding to implement environmental regulations, free trade zones in the industrial area and want to see the Prosperity Plan implemented. A few requested information on how to get funding for certificate/degree programs.

Signage and economy (11 percent) tied for the fifth most-mentioned response. Respondents believe signage needs to be less restrictive in the area; essentially companies are looking for more flexibility regarding the signs in front of their businesses. Their perception is that companies are not being informed of the changes in signage regulations; they are just fined for any violations. Sign permits were also reported as an issue. Respondents believe the city provides local businesses one set of

RECENT ACTIVITIES

LAKE TAHOE BASIN PROSPERITY PLAN

The Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan has just been released, representing an unprecedented collaboration between the five counties in the Tahoe Basin and the City of South Lake Tahoe with additional participation from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, educational institutions and business leaders. The premise was simple—diversify the local economy to develop a sustainable economy thereby increasing living wage jobs while preserving the environment.

The three "industry clusters" (how buyers and suppliers organize within an industry such as tourism) perceived as having the greatest likelihood of raising the standard of living for residents are: Tourism/Geotourism, Health/Wellness and Environmental Innovation.

- It was recommended that in order to grow our tourism economy we must first preserve and share our authentic assets which range from our favorite cafés, beaches and trails, arts and culture to our various entertainment options (festivals, concerts and gaming). And second, we must initiate an invigorated effort around recreation in the form of team sports, masters events and elite athletic events such as the Amgen Tour of California.
- Health/Wellness was identified as a cluster dependent on and related to tourism. The hospitals on both the North and South shores are each pursuing centers of excellence (oncology and orthopedics, respectively), and both will require that our communities are sustainable and attractive to potential patients and their families. Also identified was the concept of alternative medicine and health/wellness facilities including day spas and resorts offering a full week of outdoor exercise, nutrition and spa treatments.
- The third industry cluster looks at environmental innovation

RECENT ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

by leveraging the tremendous natural assets of the Tahoe Basin as well as the number of qualified individuals already located here. Ideas for this cluster ranged from a High Alpine Research and Visitor Center to the pursuit of environmentally sound practices for all local institutions and businesses. Implementation plans are well underway with the establishment of a Prosperity Center.

For more information on how to get involved, contact Michael Ward at mikewd@prospect.net or visit tahoeprosperity.org to read the full plan.

FREE BUSINESS COACHING

TahoeChamber.org's efforts to grow the local economy have always included providing valuable resources to businesses. Those services have recently been expanded through partnerships with the City of South Lake Tahoe and the California Small Business Development Center.

The City of South Lake Tahoe secured a grant that allows them to offer FREE business coaching services through TahoeChamber.org utilizing a team of experts—the Tahoe Tactical Team. The "team" is a cadre of coaches with years of successful professional experience in their fields including human resources, public relations, accounting, marketing and more. The coaches are ready to make a positive difference for businesses, and will do so in a friendly, understanding manner. They are locals and know what's happening in town and promise to help businesses make informed business decisions. This opportunity is even better than free. It's priceless and in this case, it's free!

For more information or to register for services, call the city at 530-542-6047. Contact the chamber by calling 775-588-1728.

Participating South Shore Businesses

Thank you to the following businesses for providing valuable feedback:

- 3 TURN BAR
- ABNOR/TAHOE SENIOR PLAZA
- ABUNDANT HYDROPONICS
- ACCOCH
- AGS HYDROPONICS & ORGANICS
- ALPINE ICE CREAM
- ALPACA PETES
- ALPINE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
- ALPINE CHIROPRATIC
- AND SPORTS CLINIC
- ALPINE FAMILY PRACTICE
- ANGLE'S SIGNS
- ARTRAGEOUS FINE FRAMING
- AT&T
- AUNTIE Q'S ANTIQUES AND TREASURES
- AVALEX INC.
- AWARDS OF TAHOE
- BARTON HEALTH CARE
- BARTON HOME HEALTH
- BARTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
- BEAR BEACH CAFE
- BEST WESTERN PLUS TIMBER COVE LODGE MARINA RESORT
- BLUE ANGEL CAFE
- BLUE GO
- BONANZA PRODUCE CO
- BORGES CHIROPRATIC
- BOY'S BARBERSHOP
- BUDGET INN
- CALIFORNIA COLORS
- COLLISION REPAIR
- CARBON ENTRY
- CARPET NETWORK
- CARPETS PLUS
- CASSIDY COATING & SURFACING SYSTEMS
- CHARTER ADVERTISING
- CITY OF ANGELS (2 LOCATIONS)
- COSMIC CREATIONS
- CUT LOOSE
- DAYS INN
- DOWNTOWN RESORTS INTERNATIONAL
- DOLLAR SIGNS AND GRAPHICS
- DOWNTOWN CAFE
- DR. GEORGE WORTH
- DR. NICOLE JANE, ORTHODONTIST
- DR. RICHARD L. KAHN
- EDWARD JONES
- EREN'S AUTO CARE
- EL DORADO SAVINGS BANK
- EMERALD BAY PHYSICAL THERAPY
- ENVIRONMENTAL INCENTIVES
- EVENTMASTERS
- FANTASY INN
- FARMERS INSURANCE GROUP
- FASTFRAME
- FRUIT DECK RESTAURANT & BAR
- FOX GASOLINE & CARWASH
- FRANK'S TV & ELECTRONICS
- FREDERICK WENCK D.D.S.
- GALACIOUS GLOBAL GIFTS
- GETAWAY CAFE
- GRAND CENTRAL PIZZA
- HELP-US-SELL
- HOT GOSSIP
- HOPI
- JEFF CHAMBERLAIN, D.D.S.
- FAMILY DENTISTRY
- JOHN J. CASTELLANO, A.P.C.
- KEVIN J. CASSIDY
- DENTAL PRACTICE
- KINGS BEVERAGE COMPANY
- LA PROMESA
- LAKE TAHOE EYE CARE
- LAKE TAHOE PEDIATRICS
- TOTAL CARE
- LAKE TAHOE PLUMBING & HEATING, INC.
- LAW FIRM OF LAUB & LAUB
- LIRA'S
- LOCAL'S BRUNCH CAFE
- LOS MEXICANOS RESTAURANT
- MARCELA INCOME TAX
- MARCIA SAROSIK
- DANCE STUDIO
- MARCUS ASHLEY FRAMING
- MARINE PERFORMANCE
- MAYA'S MEXICAN GRILL
- McDONALDS (2 LOCATIONS)
- WEEKS LUMBER AND HARDWARE
- MILLER'S CUSTOM CABINETS
- MOUNTAIN ALPINE MASSAGE & BODYWORK
- MOUNTAIN VIEW MANAGEMENT CORP
- MOUNTAIN YOGA
- OUTSIDE TELEVISION
- PAWFECTION PET SALON
- POWDER HOUSE SKI & BOARD
- PRAIRIE
- RED HUT RETAIL SHOP
- RICH'S SMALL ENGINE SERVICE
- RIVA GRILL
- ROADRUNNER GAS AND LIQUOR
- ROSS GROLL, D.D.S.
- SHERMAN'S BAGEL & COFFEE HAUS
- SAFE HARM CHIROPRATIC
- SAFETY
- SCOTT W. SOUTHAIR, M.D., INC.
- SESSIONS SALON
- SHERWIN-WILLIAMS
- SIERRA ATHLETIC CLUB
- SIERRA VETERINARY HOSPITAL
- SKI BUM FAMILY INC. (G&S SERVICES)
- SKI BUTLERS SKI RENTALS
- SKI RUN BOAT COMPANY
- SOUTH SIDE AUTO BODY
- SPOUTS CAFE
- STEVE'S TRANSMISSION SERVICE
- SUBWAY
- SUGAR FINE BAKERY
- SUPER 8
- TAHOE BOWL
- TAHOE FAMILY DENTISTS
- TAHOE HEALTH TOUCH
- TAHOE HEMP CO.
- TAHOE PARADISE CHEVRON & FOOD
- TAHOE POOL SERVICE
- TAHOE RENTAL CONNECTION
- TAHOE SPORT FISHING COMPANY
- TAHOE VALLEY PHARMACY
- TAHOE WOMEN'S CARE
- THA TAHOE CLINIC
- THE DESIGN SHOPPE
- THE RADIATOR DOCTOR
- THE TUDOR PUB
- THE VILLAGE BOARD SHOP
- TIMELESS SCULPTURES
- TRINITY LANDSCAPE & SNOW REMOVAL
- VITALITY LAKE TAHOE
- VATTABEE
- WESTERN NEVADA SUPPLY
- WILLIAM A. DOWNEY, O.D., INC.
- YELLOW SUBMARINE
- YONKER CONSTRUCTION, INC.

The Sacramento Metro Chamber is the largest and oldest voice of business in the greater Sacramento area. Representing nearly 2,000 member businesses and business organizations in the six-county Sacramento region, the Metro Chamber serves as the region's leading proponent of regional cooperation and primary advocate on issues affecting business, strengthening the regional economy and quality of life. As a founding member of Partners for Prosperity, and in its role as managing partner of Metro Pulse, the Metro Chamber executes the Business Walk Series in cooperation with its local chamber and public sector partners. The Metro Chamber has partnered with 17 other regional jurisdictions and economic development organizations to provide one-on-one support for equity businesses and throughout the Sacramento metropolitan region. These organizations, through Metro Pulse, are meeting one-on-one with businesses throughout the six-county Sacramento region to identify and address individual business needs and ensure continued growth and economic prosperity. For additional information concerning Metro Pulse, visit metropulse.org.

1. Partners for Prosperity is the Sacramento region's economic development strategy, which focuses on developing people, place and business.

2. Metro Pulse is a coalition of 18 public and private sector partners focused on ensuring that the Sacramento metropolitan region is the best place to do business in California.



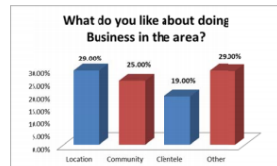
Northgate | June 13, 2014

POST-EVENT REPORT

The Business Walk is an ongoing economic development program that takes place throughout the six-county Sacramento region. On June 13, 2014, volunteer business and civic leaders visited 101 businesses in the Northgate area of Sacramento and were successful in talking with 85 them. Their conversation focused on three basic questions: 1) How is business; 2) What do you like about doing business in the community; and 3) What should be done to improve doing business in Northgate?

Question 1: How Is Business?

When asked how business is doing overall, over half (52%) of the companies interviewed described their business as good/great. Although many did not specifically cite a reason for their good business climate, some attributed their success to being established institutions or businesses with recent management/ownership change. A modest 29% of businesses indicated that they were steady/fair. Most of these suggested that their business is "up and down" and largely dependent on the season. Finally, 19% of businesses reported that their business is poor/slow. For these companies, they also viewed their business as being dependent on the season and claimed summer was simply their slow months.

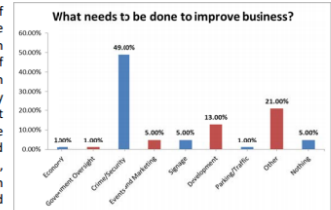


Question 2: What do you like about doing business in the area?

Location was the top cited reason (29%) as to why companies like doing business in Northgate. They view Northgate as a good area for business because of the high traffic volume and proximity to home. The community (25%) was also an important reason why they enjoy doing business in Northgate. Many businesses expressed feeling that they like the Hispanic community and the fact that there are a lot of families coming in. Likewise, 19% of businesses reported that the clientele is strong and loyal. Moreover, 29% of business cited other reasons for liking Northgate as a place for business. While some said the neighborhood is challenging for business, others simply said it was "okay" and had no strong opinion otherwise.

Question 3: What should be done to improve business?

To somewhat positive surprise, only 1% of businesses thought the economy needed to improve and only 1% believed there was too much government oversight. However, nearly half (49%) of businesses think the area needs to improve with crime/security. Many businesses are specifically concerned with the large homeless population that they believe adversely affects business. Many are simply not happy with hesitant police and would appreciate a greater presence of law enforcement, particularly at night since crime has reportedly been an issue. Development was also an important need for businesses. Many want an anchor tenant in the shopping center, and overall cleanup/development of the streets.



While 5% of respondents are still looking for more events/marketing, signage also continues to be a concern. Five percent (5%) of businesses acknowledged that their companies are not all visible from the street and because of that, proper signage is so important. Some had similar issues with maintenance and unattractive trees blocking their building. Parking and traffic appears to be a small concern and other factors (21%) include a need for more technology and more proactive involvement from landlords. Finally, 5% reported that nothing needs to be done to improve business.

Presented by:



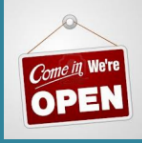
Sponsored by:



The Sacramento Metro Chamber is the largest and oldest voice of business in the greater Sacramento area. Representing nearly 2,000 member businesses and business organizations in the six-county Sacramento region, the Metro Chamber serves as the region's leading proponent of regional cooperation and primary advocate on issues affecting business, strengthening the regional economy and quality of life. As a principal partner in Next Economy Capital Region Prosperity Plan 1 and in its role as managing partner of Business Bridge, the Metro Chamber executes the Business Walk Series in cooperation with its local chamber and public sector partners. The Metro Chamber has partnered with 19 other regional jurisdictions and economic development organizations to provide one-on-one support for county businesses and throughout the 6-county Capital region. These organizations, through Business Bridge, are meeting one-on-one with businesses throughout the region to identify and address individual business needs and ensure continued growth and economic prosperity. For additional information concerning Business Bridge, visit metrochamber.org/business-bridge

- 1 The Next Economy Capital Region Prosperity Plan is the 6-county Capital region's economic development strategy.
- 2 Business Bridge is a coalition of 20 public and private sector partners focused on ensuring that the 6-county Capital region is the best place to do business in California

Business Walk Program



Powered by the COEDC

Business Walks Program Finds 90% of Central Okanagan Businesses Steady or Increasing

Executive Summary

The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission facilitated the first Business Walk in Canada in October, 2012. To date, over 750 businesses have been visited through the Business Walks program as one means to gather information from the business community and identify programs to facilitate business growth.

The information obtained captures the pulse of businesses throughout the region, connects business support agencies to the business community, communicates industry intelligence to multiple civic and business stakeholders and identifies opportunities for COEDC's Business Enhancement programming.

Outcomes from Business Walks to date include:

- One-on-one assistance has been provided to over 100 companies across all sectors as a result of the Business Walks program;
- The Ministry of Jobs Tourism and Skills Training is now using the Business Walks program as a best practice;
- Following the May, 2013 Walk to manufacturers, the COEDC facilitated a Business Beyond Borders session to 25 Okanagan Manufacturer's to address employee recruitment and retention strategies;
- Information from the May Manufacturer's walk provided industry intelligence to District of West Kelowna staff in the facilitation of a Manufacturers Round Table session;

6% of the 360 businesses visited mentioned various "Other" factors they liked about doing business in their area – these were mainly lifestyle-related. 3% of businesses cited "Availability of talented labour," reflecting the challenges of attracting and retaining skilled workers increasingly experienced by businesses throughout the region. 3% said the Cost of Doing Business was what they liked most, and 2% said Business Friendly Local Government.



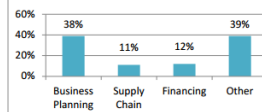
Question #3: What can be done to make your business thrive?

Responses ranged from tangible needs such as increased signage, to technical assistance requirements such as marketing. Common themes throughout the Region include:

- Upgrading infrastructure i.e. road and sidewalk improvements and continued revitalization projects;

- Due to the nature of Hwy 97, many business feel there is a need for increased directional signage to entice potential consumers from the highway to business districts;
- Additional parking options and increased monitoring of regulated areas;
- Increased buy local campaigns collectively throughout the Region;
- Increased communication of projects in community and region. i.e. growth plans, available services etc.

What Do You Need?



Question #4: What specific information would you like to have access to?

Information related to Business Planning was an area of need expressed by 38% of businesses visited. Another 39% cited their category of need as "Other" – frequently stated within this category was the need for "marketing," "advertising" and "statistics".

October 1, 2013 Business Walk

Within a three hour blitz more than 65 business and civic leaders walked door-to-door and connected with 360 businesses throughout Peachland, West Kelowna, West bank First Nation, Kelowna and Lake Country business districts.



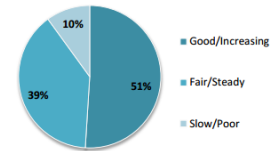
Businesses were asked:

- How is Business?
- What do you like most about doing business in the region?
- What can be done to help your business thrive?
- What specific information would you like to have access to?

Summary/Results

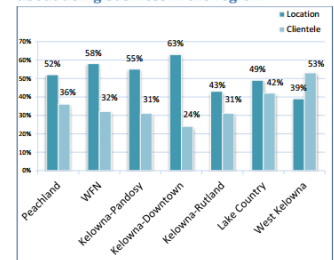
Of the 360 businesses visited, 42 were conducted in Peachland, 49 in West Kelowna, 31 in Westbank First Nation, 166 in Kelowna (76 Downtown, 29 in Pandosy, 61 in Rutland) and 72 in Lake Country.

Question 1: How is Business?



Results indicate a generally positive outlook from 90% of the businesses visited.

Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the region?



When asked what they like most about doing

What's Next?



The Business Walks program is facilitated and made possible by regional partnerships. The Economic Development Commission would like to recognize and thank the following:



For more information or inquires please contact:

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