



**CENTRAL
OKANAGAN**

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

October 1, 2014 Business Walk



Industry Intelligence &
Programming Opportunities

Central Okanagan Economic
Development Commission

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Common Themes throughout the Region

- All businesses that reported “slow/poor” to the How is Business question are scheduled for follow up by the Commission and appropriate partners;
- Challenges around hiring and human resources issues were mentioned in every district visited. This is where information was needed by the greatest number of businesses;
- As in previous years, the need for more information around business planning continued to be expressed. This includes information *related* to business planning such as statistics, marketing and advertising help – topics which were often cited under “Other” types of information;
- Businesses would like to see more advertising and awareness of what their communities have to offer, both retail/commercial products and services, and tourism/leisure amenities and attractions;
- All districts feel their Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade, business improvement associations and/or local government have a major role in broadening awareness and marketing of the district, for example, through buy local campaigns and business directories;
- The need for “more business friendly government” is evident, especially in relation to processing of permits, and faster results (“less red tape”) in making changes related to directional signage and traffic infrastructure.



Lake Country

The 72 Lake Country businesses visited were optimistic about business in their community. 36% described their particular business environment as Fair/Steady and 61% as Good/Increasing, in total representing 97% of the businesses visited. For 56% of Lake Country businesses their “Location” was what they liked most about doing business in the area. “Clientele” was the second most cited reason at 39%.

Asked what would help their business thrive, 22 of the 72 (31%) of respondents suggested “more development” and “increased advertising and promotion” would be of assistance. Specific marketing initiatives were mentioned including a shop local campaign, a local business coupon book and “more Chamber meetings/events.”

A number of additional comments related to a desire for increased support from local government, for example: “unable to expand due to local government,” “better communication with the District,” and “less government intervention.” Several comments were also provided about the need for more and better signage.

Asked what information they would like to have access to locally, the major need was information related to Hiring/Human Resources, requested by 33% of businesses.

Kelowna – Rutland

Business walkers in Rutland connected with considerably more businesses in 2014 than in 2013 – 90 businesses compared to 61 a year earlier. Of this larger number of respondents, 35% described a Fair/Steady business environment and 61% described business as Good/Increasing.

“Location” was what most Rutland businesses liked best about the area (64%). This was up considerably from 43% who liked their location best in 2013. The next most cited factor was “Clientele” for 19% of businesses, down from 31% who put Clientele first a year earlier. 7% said the “Cost of Doing Business” was what they liked most about being in Rutland.



Rutland Business Walk Team

Growing pride in the community was a general theme when businesses were asked, “What would help your business thrive?” “Change the image of Rutland – Rutland is well on its way” was a sentiment shared by a number of businesses. Specifically, the desire for “more green areas,” “street improvements,” “more trees” and “more bike lanes” was mentioned. Improved security was brought up by several businesses including the need for better lighting on roadways and in alleyways, and to reduce

vandalism and shoplifting. A number of businesses suggested Rutland's image and referral network would also be improved by attracting "more professional businesses" including "doctors and pharmacists" to work in the area.

For the 13 businesses that responded to the question, "What additional information would you like access to?" resources for Hiring/Human Resources was the area mentioned most, requested by 6 businesses.

Kelowna-Capri

The 2014 Business Walk included businesses in the Capri area of Kelowna which has not been visited during previous walks. 40 businesses were seen on Kirschner Road, and on Harvey Avenue and Springfield Road near Kirschner. These diverse businesses ranged from retailers and service providers to businesses involved in light manufacturing.

Business was described as Fair/Steady for 48% of these businesses and as Good/Increasing for another 48%. Location was what 75% of these businesses liked most about their area followed by Clientele at 18%.

Asked what would help them thrive, assistance with business planning, specifically marketing was frequently mentioned along with factors related to finding and retaining employees ("succession planning", "wage subsidies" and "access to more younger workers.") A few comments were offered about "building up the community with arts and culture" and the "need for an area association."

The greatest need for information was financing for business followed by resources to assist business planning, advertising and promotion.

Downtown Kelowna

The 54 businesses visited in Downtown Kelowna described a very positive business environment - 28% said business was Fair/Steady and 67% said Good/Increasing for a combined total of 95%. This is up from 89% in 2013.

"Location" was once again what most businesses (59%) liked about the area although this is down from 63% who put "location" first a year earlier. "Clientele" was the next most liked factor about being downtown at 21%. The "vibe of downtown," "new renos", "improved cleanliness" and the feeling more "younger people are moving into the downtown core" were other reasons businesses liked being in the area.



Peggy Athans (r) with the DKA speaks with Gueng Korean Restaurant owner Lucy Park

Asked what would help their businesses thrive, 15 of the 42 respondents to this question (36%) cited various improvements related to parking. Problems mentioned included people parking in paid employee stalls, a shortage of parking spaces on streets and in parkades, a shortage of longer-term parking and the cost of parking. Security issues were also mentioned by some businesses including the need to ensure customers feel safe in getting from their cars to businesses.

Security-related issues were not mentioned as frequently as a year earlier, however, indicating the revitalization of downtown Kelowna has had a positive effect in this regard. As in past Business Walk surveys, downtown businesses know the importance of foot traffic and continued emphasis on events and activities that encourage people to come downtown was mentioned by several businesses.

28% of downtown businesses expressed the need for information related to Hiring/Human Resources, and 22% would like information related to business planning. 39% of businesses wanted a wide range of “Other” information, mainly marketing related.

Kelowna – Pandosy

The 30 businesses visited in the Kelowna-Pandosy area this year continue to be positive about their business environment. 30% said business was Fair/Steady and 67% said business was Good/Increasing for the same combined total of 97% obtained in 2013.



This year 77% of Pandosy area businesses said “Location” was what they liked most about the area, up from 55% a year earlier, and “Clientele” was rated at 20%, down from 31%.

Parking continues to be the dominant issue for Pandosy area merchants. 56% or 9 of the 16 respondents to the question, “What would help

you to thrive?” cited parking concerns, from the need for more public parking on Pandosy to the challenge of parking limited to two-hours for employees in the area. When businesses were asked what kind of information they would like access to, parking-related issues again were top of mind: most respondents wanted to know about future plans for parking in the area.

Westbank First Nation

The WFN Business Walk team reached significantly more businesses in 2014 – 41 compared to 31 businesses in 2013. Among this larger pool of businesses a more positive response to the local business environment was reported: 29% said business was Fair/Steady and 66% said business was Good/Increasing for a combined total of 95% - up from 80% last year. 5% rated business as Slow/Poor, down considerably from 20% in 2013.

53% of business said their “Location” was what they liked most about their district and 28% said “Clientele” was what they liked most.

Asked what would help their business thrive, several operators cited factors such as directional signage and advertising to “let people know how to find us” and “bring more people in.” Several suggestions for improvement were received about traffic infrastructure related to crosswalks, intersections and visibility of businesses.

Comments from the mostly retail businesses that exist here suggest they want to be more involved in the community as it grows. More regular events done in “partnership with Westbank First Nation” such as “tent sales and sidewalk sales” were suggested, and a number of businesses said adding unique/specialty businesses to the existing number of franchise outlets and anchor stores would be beneficial –

more doctors, dentists and specialty food stores would provide more shopping options and “draw in more people.”

Many businesses appreciate the vitality that comes with the growth and development that has taken place on WFN, but would also like to see unoccupied retail/commercial space filled before more development occurs.

West Kelowna

A very positive business environment was described by the 32 businesses visited in West Kelowna. Of these, 41% said business was Fair/Steady and 56% said business was Good/Increasing for a combined total of 97% - up from 84% in 2013.

“Location” was what 50% of the businesses liked most about their area – a considerable increase from the 39% who said Location a year earlier. “Clientele” was the next most liked factor mentioned by 41% of businesses.

Asked what would help their businesses thrive, more “advertising” and “signage” were frequently mentioned along with “more high density development.” West Kelowna business operators also said access to trades workers, and more workforce training programs available at an earlier age would ultimately help them thrive. A few comments referred to the need to deal with “panhandlers approaching customers” and other security issues in the community. Promoting a “shop local” attitude was also mentioned.

Nine of the 32 businesses that responded to the question, “What information would you like access to?” wanted information related to hiring/human resources, marketing, business planning and financing.



A visit to Manchester Signs in West Kelowna

Peachland

The 41 businesses in the District of Peachland described a positive view of their business environment; 27% said business was Fair/Steady and 61% said business was Good/Increasing for a combined total of 87% - just slightly lower than the 90% positive environment described in 2013. 9% said their business environment was Slow/Poor.

“Location” was cited as the factor most businesses like about the area at 66% - significantly higher than the 52% that put Location first a year earlier. “Clientele” was the second most appealing factor at 29% although this was lower than the 36% that rated Clientele second in 2013. Only one business said the “Cost of Doing Business” was what they liked most about Peachland’s business environment and one other business said the “small town feel” of the community was what they liked best.



When asked what would help their businesses thrive, Peachland businesses provided a wide range of comments: the need for more advertising/promotion of the community was mentioned by 14 businesses including the need for improved signage and a buy local program. Several businesses were concerned about the challenge of finding employees, a problem that extends throughout the Central Okanagan and beyond but is exacerbated by the seasonal nature of Peachland. The need to attract more young families to Peachland was also mentioned.

Suggestions for improvement from a seasonal/tourism perspective included “beach maintenance”, “a day wharf at 13th and Beach Avenue” and “longer summertime operating hours.”