



## Fernie Business Walk Results

July 2018

# ABOUT THE REPORT

This report describes findings from the Business Walk conducted with 70 businesses in Fernie. A Business Walks are a tool to gather and track the pulse of the local businesses and help community leaders identify measures and actions that ensure jobs, goods, and services stay in the community.

The 70 businesses were surveyed during a three-hour period on June 13, 2018. The businesses were visited by 16 volunteers, typically in teams of 3, including Chamber Board members, elected officials, and business leaders.

## WHO DID WE TALK TO?

count		Description
1	11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
4	23	Construction
3	31	Manufacturing
2	32	Manufacturing
14	44	Retail trade
8	45	Retail trade
1	48	Transportation and warehousing
3	52	Finance and insurance
1	53	Management of companies and enterprises
6	54	Professional, scientific and technical services
5	56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services
1	62	Health care and social assistance
2	71	Arts, entertainment and recreation
17	72	Accommodation and food services
2	81	Other services (except public administration)

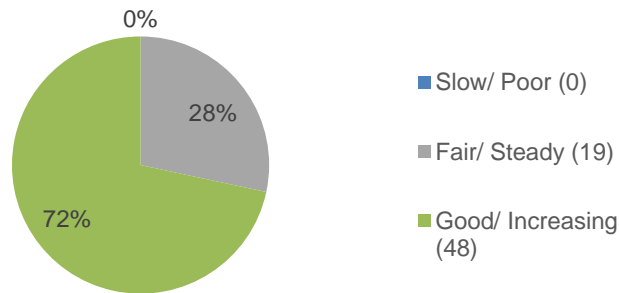
The above is a distribution of business represented in the survey by NAICS codes.

The six volunteer teams went to:

- Ghost rider Business District
- Highway between bridges
- Highway south of bridge, West Fernie
- Downtown south of 6<sup>th</sup> street
- Downtown north of 6<sup>th</sup> street
- Home-based invited to come to the Legion to meet with volunteers

# SUMMARY / RESULTS

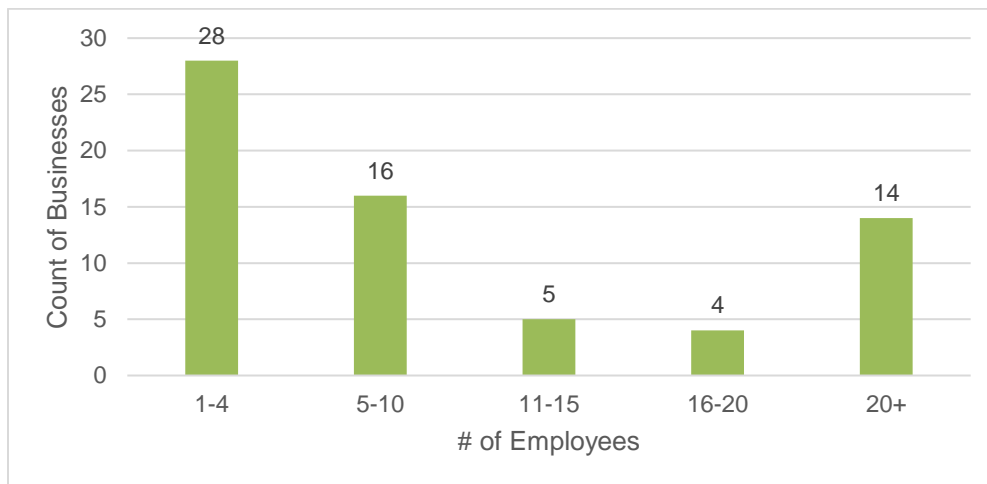
## QUESTION 1: PLEASE RATE THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR BUSINESS.



When asked to rate the state of business, 72% of businesses provided a positive outlook responding with good/ increasing.

## QUESTION 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Businesses were asked about their number of full-time, part-time, and temporary employees. The survey represents 487 full-time, 337 part-time, and 38 temporary or seasonal employees for a total of 860 employees.

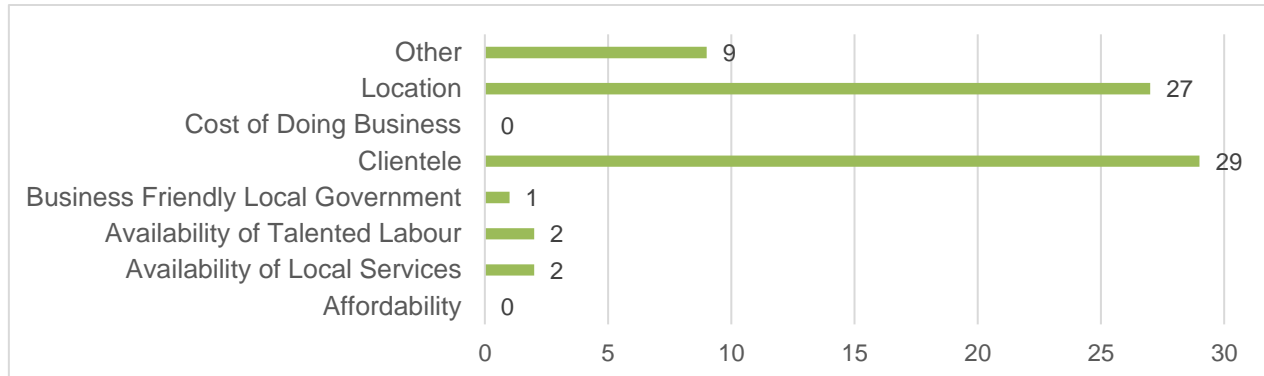


Comparing full-time to part-time employment by business size:

Business Size	Full-time	Part-time
1-4	72%	26%
5-10	64%	31%
11-15	90%	7%
16-20	52%	48%
20+	44%	50%

### QUESTION 3: WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT DOING BUSINESS IN FERNIE?

When asked what they like most about doing business in Fernie, Clientele was the top choice followed by Location.



Other comments included:

- The People
- The opportunity to live in Fernie
- Availability of talented local services and businesses
- Lifestyle
- Small retail market (better than competition in the city)
- Provides a chance to live here
- Home, community grew up in

### QUESTION 4 WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE?

This open-ended question provided a variety of responses.

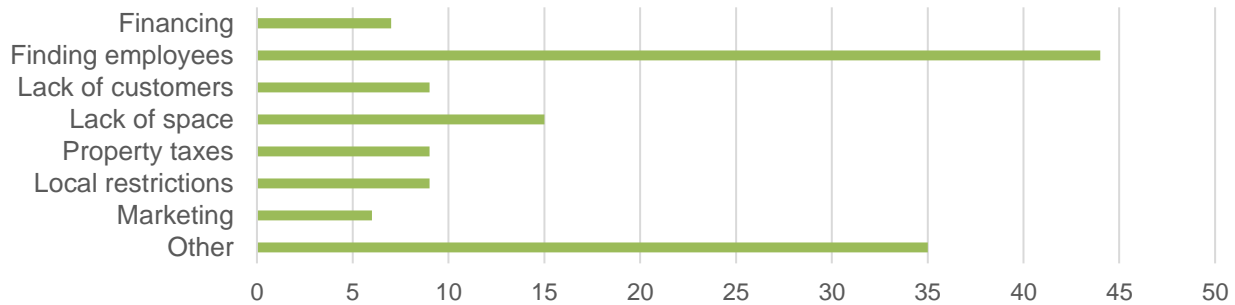
Main themes arising from the survey are:

- Need for Commercial Space – respondents noted a shortage of commercial space and that current spaces are rundown and in need of significant upgrades.
- Employees – respondents noted a need to attract more employees to town for all position levels, apprentice funding and challenges to retain staff in shoulder seasons.
- Marketing and Promotion -respondents are looking for more opportunities to collaborate, to promote local shopping, and to capitalize on events.
- City Regulations and Impacts – respondents commented on red tape, rules around temporary signs, taxes, paving, lighting and parking are affecting their businesses.
- Supply Chain – respondents commented on cost of products, freight, and procurement process of the mine and mining supply companies.
- Provincial and Federal Items – temporary foreign workers, PNP, migration, PST,

(a complete list of comments are found at the end of this document)

## QUESTION 5: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING YOUR BUSINESS?

Finding employees was the biggest challenge for 62% of the respondents. 50% of respondents identified other, and 21% identified Lack of Space as a challenge.



Themes arising from *Other* challenges listed by respondents:

Commercial Space – need lease space, lack of commercial space, can't find local land to operate from, nowhere to grow, lack of available storage space, lack of janitorial inventory and commercial buildings, at maximum space – no room to expand further

Provincial Sales Tax – competition from AB where there is no tax, frustrations with PST

Seasonality

High cost of living – creating a challenge to retaining employees

Housing – lack of housing stock, rental stock, housing prices

US dollar differential

## QUESTION 6: RETIREMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Plan to retire in the next 5 years?

Yes – 11

No – 44

Have a Succession Plan in Place?

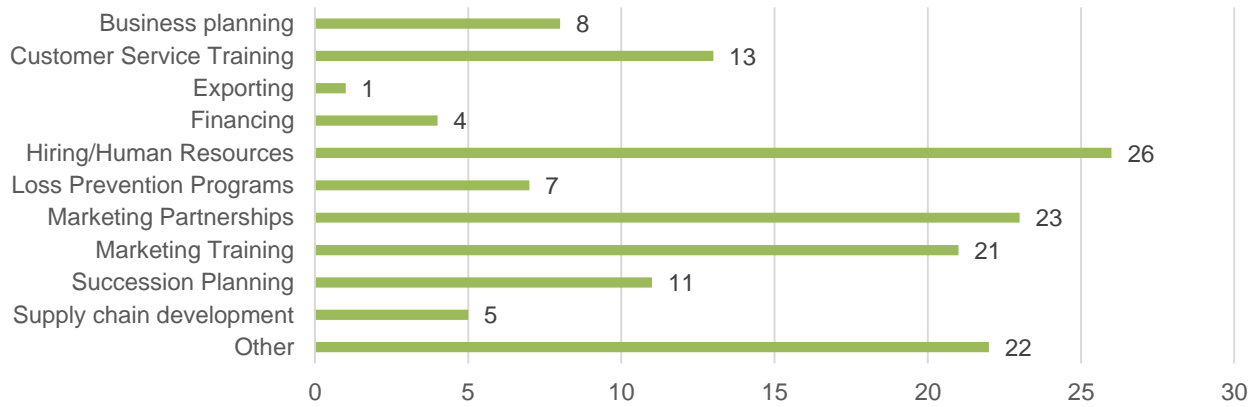
Yes – 14

No – 35

N/A – 19

## QUESTION 7; WHAT SPECIFIC INFORMATION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE ACCESS TO LOCALLY?

Businesses in Fernie are looking for a variety of information locally with Hiring / Human Resources being the most requested piece.



### Other Information Requested:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Bookkeeping                      | Report on building starts or permit applications approved |
| Arts funding for training        | Professional services training                            |
| Tax planning                     | Grant access  |
| Client training                  | Billing and collecting                                    |
| Benefits                         | Local Economic Update                                     |
| Social Media Marketing, hands-on | Time management and streamline calendar                   |

A big thank-you to the many volunteers and businesses who made the 2018 Business Walk a success.



# WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE?

## Full comment list

- Commercial Space
  - Coworking space
  - Current spaces available are old, rundown, need of significant upgrades due to grandfathering building codes
  - Get on main street
  - Need land to accommodate our growing business commercial land
  - New commercial spaces that are ready for lease/ purchase in the structural state where services and wall could be added as appropriate for business
- Employees
  - Attracting people to Fernie
  - Attracting professional employees, competing with Teck for employees
  - Availability of long-term labour.
  - Availability of staffing
  - Bring new immigrants to support business and want to work fulltime
  - Employee Support students move to larger cities and don't want to stay in small community
  - Employee training on what Fernie has to offer wider use of Ambassador program
  - Filling entry level positions
  - Funding for an apprentice
  - Housing, lost 3 employees before winter due to housing
  - Make it easier to keep migrant workers
  - Need more 1 staff
  - Qualified professional employees, attracting qualified tradespeople
  - Staffing hard to find good staff and retain them, especially in off season
  - Support to find employees and employee housing
- Marketing and Promotion
  - Christmas season community business hours
  - Cooperation between business cross promotion between businesses
  - Educate people on the value of marketing
  - Encourage buy local
  - Events on Fridays before long weekends
  - Feel most marketing efforts on downtown.
  - Getting name out, transition with new owner and manager on mat leave
  - Good partnerships
  - More advertised opportunities, social media sharing, print, local radio
  - More encouragement to get people downtown
  - More exposure need more branding
  - More foot traffic
  - More opportunities to exhibit
  - Need: People from Wapiti don't come in. Advertise sponsorship but not bring

People knowing we are here and not shopping online  
Program events and festivals to draw more visitation in slower seasons, mid-June and attract different demographics  
Promote shopping locally supporting community  
Rubber tire, off hill  
See more promotion of shoulder season in Fernie

- City Regulations and Impacts

Be allowed to have temporary signage  
Better visibility, signage, name the business park.  
City of Fernie regulatory decisions made based on hard economic data vs personal opinions  
Improved signage for highway businesses, increased focus on highway businesses.  
Improvement of the business park paving  
Less red tape with City.  
Local government taxes, cost of doing business  
Maintain / improve access to transfer station and services available there  
No parking downtown  
Parking zone for staff/ employees  
Pave the roads  
Paving the road in the industrial park  
Paving, lighting, signage to business park  
Reduction in red tape city working more for business friendlier to expand in current location  
Reduction of red tape with City  
Snow removal

- Supply Chain

Cost of products  
Mining supplier more open and transparent  
Need more services and amenities to keep people in Fernie  
Teck procurement process more transparent.

- Provincial and Federal Items

Advocacy for implementing TIST again/input tax credit  
Bring back the HST or adjust the PST  
Dealing with individual liquor boards and provincial government regulations that are not consistent (i.e. taxation)  
Government to allow foreign workers  
Make it easier to keep migrant workers  
PNP and LMI attract foreign workers  
TFW program improvements make easier to hire TFW



- Other

- Consistent Weather

- Embracing new technology/ change

- Housing

- Improve and diversify local economy

- More funding for the arts

- More housing growth strata, commercial and residential

- More input by businesses

- Reduce general cost of living to create more disposable income for homeowners

- Spring fair was a success, work with Chamber to connect employees and employers

- To double in size