

Business Retention & Expansion Project

FINAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2021
TOWN OF GRIMSBY

PREPARED BY: RACHAEL BALL-CONDON



TOWN OF
GRIMSBY



Acknowledgements

Local Businesses

The Town of Grimsby's Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) project would not have been possible without the participation and collaboration from our local businesses. Since the BR&E campaign launched on April 29th, 2021, Grimsby businesses from across all sectors engaged in the BR&E initiative by subscribing to the projects Let's Talk Business portal, reaching out to project team members for access to resources and participating in the BR&E survey, which was made available from May 20th to September 30th 2021.

The project team would like to thank the following business for their participation in the BR&E retreat, which was held on October 20th, 2021:

Forty Public House

Boone Dog Office Spaces

Harmony Jewelers

Sherwin Williams

The Casablanca Hotel

Station One Coffee House

Business Retention and Expansion Working Group

Without the hard work and dedication of the BR&E Working Group, Grimsby's BR&E project would not have been possible. Volunteers and staff resources provided invaluable leadership, time and effort to this project to ensure it was a success. A special thank you to the Town's volunteer and BR&E Project Coordinator Susan Manuel, as without her this project would not have been possible. The team would also like to thank Adam Joon, Grimsby's former Economic Development Officer, who had a tremendous impact on the local business community during his time with the Corporation through his success in fostering more positive relationships between the Town and local businesses.

Working Group Members included:

Susan Manuel, BR&E Project Coordinator and Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee (GEDAC) Member

Rachael Ball-Condron, Town of Grimsby Executive Assistant

Rebecca Shelley, Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

Councillor Kevin Richie, GEDAC Member

Provincial Staff Advisory

The guidance and insight provided by our partnering organization, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), was invaluable. These participants included:

Rian Omollo, Economic Development Specialist

Nick Kinkel, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Development Advisor

The Resource Network

A number of organizations supported project implementation by providing follow-up with businesses, participating in and assisting with action planning and implementation of the BR&E retreats, promoting the program throughout its entirety, and compiling and inputting data for review. Invaluable contributions were made by:

Brian York, Director of Economic Development and Government Relations,
City of St. Catharines

Linda Sicoli, Economic Development Officer, Niagara Region



Town of Grimsby
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	5
BR&E Background	6
Government of Ontario Support	6
Grimsby BR&E Process	7
Project Timeline	11
Survey Results	12
Business Information	13
COVID-19 Recovery	14
Business Climate	16
Future Plans & Business Development	19
Workforce	21
Community Development	24
Grimsby Specific	26
Key Findings and Action Plan	27
Task Force Retreat Findings	27
Results Achieved	27
Action Plan	29

Introduction

In 2020, Council approved Grimsby's first ever Business Retention and Expansion program to determine how the Town could better support local businesses so that they can grow, create jobs and stay in Grimsby. This supported Council's second strategic priority "Business Attraction, Growth and Retention", which sets the goal of fostering a vibrant business environment in Grimsby. To support this initiative, the Town's first Economic Development Officer was hired in the fall of 2020, who went on to form the BR&E Working Group.

With 2020 and 2021 bringing many unprecedented changes to the local business community due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BR&E working group ensured the program helped Town staff obtain feedback regarding how the municipality could continue to support local businesses through the pandemic to ensure a successful recovery. The working group utilized various provincially-developed BR&E survey versions to obtain information about workforce attraction and retention, the Town's business climate, community and business development, and sector specific questions.

The ultimate objective of the BR&E project was to collect data that not only fed into the development of a Town of Grimsby action plan, but would support the Town's upcoming Economic Development Strategy. Additionally, the working group hoped to foster an environment that supported ongoing dialogue between the public and private sectors to ensure a better understanding of the issues and trends that exist within the business community, the needs of private enterprises, create opportunities to address concerns and, where possible, remove barriers by responding to business issues.

The BR&E program provided a great opportunity for local businesses to have a voice in the development of Grimsby's business community and to help influence future economic development decision-making. The information gathered from Grimsby's first ever BR&E initiative provided the Town with an opportunity to develop clear and measurable actions that will be reflected in the upcoming Economic Development Strategy as the Town continues to work to increase the competitiveness of local businesses and build a stronger local economy.

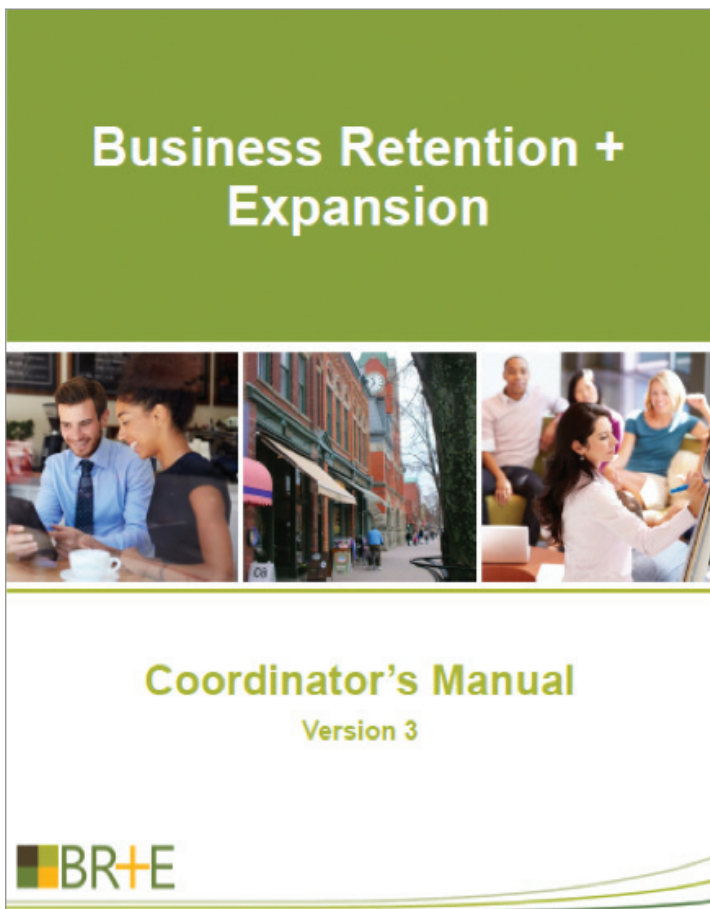
BR&E Background

Government of Ontario Support

The BR&E initiative is an economic development tool that was developed by the Province of Ontario to provide communities with a better understanding of the needs of local businesses and to help set priorities for projects to address those needs. First introduced by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in 1998, the BR&E program has evolved over time to become a business-friendly and action-oriented economic development tool.

Developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the BR&E initiative enables municipal leaders, partners and staff to develop proactive short and long term goals that will increase competitiveness, enable business development, investment and job creation, and foster an environment for future growth.

The BR&E initiative involves four stages: initial preparation, the collection and analysis of data, development of goals and action plans, and the implementation of the actions along with monitoring and tracking of results.



Preparation

- Communication Local Businesses
- Launch “Let’s Talk Business”
- Business Survey Preregistration

1

Collect & Analyse

- Business Survey Launch
- Action Immediate Issues and Opportunities
- Survey Data Analysis

2

4 Implement & Monitor

- Implement Actions
- Monitor and Track Progress
- Plan for 2022 BR&E Initiative

3 Develop Goals & Action Plans

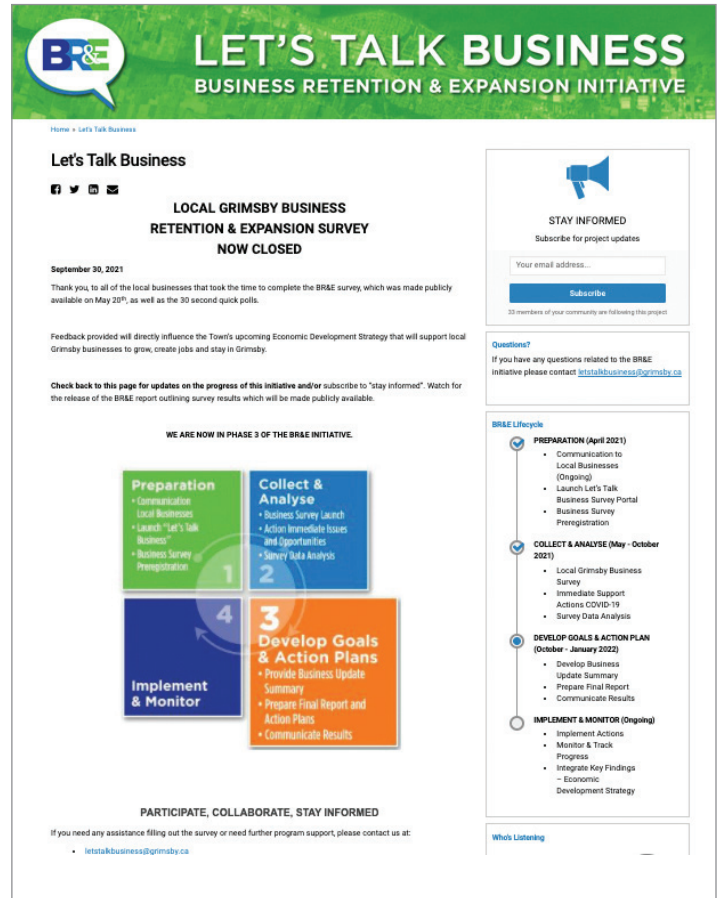
- Provide Business Update Summary
- Prepare Final Report and Action Plans
- Communicate Results



Grimsby BR&E Process

Led by the working group’s BR&E Project Coordinator, the initiative began with the project team engaging with a local design company to create BR&E branding that would be used throughout the initiative. On April 29th, the campaign was publicly launched through print ads in local newspapers and the Town’s social media platforms. The messaging of the campaign launch explained the importance of the BR&E project to local businesses and informed readers that a “Let’s Talk Business” portal would be developed (right) so they could engage with the project team, receive updates and learn more about the importance of the BR&E initiative.

From April – May, project team members built the Let’s Talk Business portal on the Town’s Let’s Talk Grimsby website, which included FAQs, contact information for the project team, and all advertising materials. The online survey, which included over 300 questions, was also built and tested on this platform.



Following the launch of the survey on May 20th, team members engaged in an aggressive advertising campaign to engage local businesses and encourage them to participate in the program. Communication materials included local newspaper advertisements, four direct mail postcards to local businesses, various social media posts highlighting the different topics covered in the survey, and personalized letters sent to local industrial businesses. Project team members also contacted businesses directly to encourage survey participation and partnered with other local community initiatives, including the buy local campaign. Facilitated by the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce, raffle prizes were offered to randomly selected local businesses who submitted survey feedback.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Town of Grimsby's Economic Development Advisory Committee (GEDAC) and Economic Development Officer are in final preparation for the launch of our first Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) initiative with local businesses. BR&E is an economic development initiative, connecting the Town of Grimsby with existing businesses to better understand and respond to local needs.

The goal of the program is to support local businesses so that they can **grow, create jobs, and stay in Grimsby**. Objectives of the program involve developing and activating an action plan to encourage business development opportunities, investment, and job creation, and collecting critical business and market data to support the economic development planning efforts of the Town now and into the future.

Local Grimsby businesses are invited and encouraged to participate in a business sector specific survey process and ongoing dialogue providing critical information to the development of a supporting Economic Development action plan.

Over the next few weeks information for business survey preregistration will be shared in local newspapers, social media, and on the Town of Grimsby website.

Preregistration, survey completion, and continuing dialogue between local businesses and the Town's Economic Development team will occur on our "Let's Talk Business" portal, which will be launched soon on the Town of Grimsby website. We encourage all local businesses to register, participate in the survey, and join the conversation to continue to improve our business environment in Grimsby.

Watch for the launch of "Let's Talk Business" & Survey Registration.

TOWN OF GRIMSBY | Business Retention & Expansion Initiative

UPDATE

NEW COVID-19 BUSINESS SUPPORT
Town of Grimsby Website
(Let's Talk Business Tab)

BR&E Survey results show that local businesses are asking for help with the many COVID-19 updates, supporting grants, and programs available, as they try to keep up with changing rules & opportunities.

We hear you, and we are here to support you, and your business.

Visit the Town of Grimsby website to register & complete your business survey.
www.grimsby.ca

PARTICIPATE, COLLABORATE, STAY INFORMED

In partnership with the Grimsby Chamber of Commerce

Please contact the Town of Grimsby if you require accessibility accommodations.

Local Business Road to Recovery

Tell us what you WANT and NEED in our Town of Grimsby Economic Development Plan

... don't miss this opportunity

UPDATE

Complete the BR&E Survey to be entered into a RAFFLE in partnership with the GRIMSBY'S GOT IT! - BUY LOCAL CAMPAIGN.

The BR&E team will purchase a \$100 GIFT CARD FROM WINNING BUSINESSES TO BE INCLUDED IN "THE GRIMSBY'S GOT IT!" CUSTOMER CONTEST BASKETS

Visit grimsby.ca Let's Talk Business

UPDATE

CONCERNED ABOUT DEMAND FOR YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES?

Complete the BR&E SURVEY to let us know how we can SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF YOUR BUSINESS!

Visit grimsby.ca Let's Talk Business

SURVEY AVAILABLE NOW!

Your participation is critical in influencing an economic development plan that will support local Grimsby businesses.

Your survey data will never be shared publicly or internally in a way that connects your responses to you or your business.

A final BR&E report outlining the survey findings will be available to all local businesses and shared publicly later this year.

Visit the Town of Grimsby website to register & complete your business survey.
www.grimsby.ca

PARTICIPATE, COLLABORATE, STAY INFORMED

In partnership with the Grimsby Chamber of Commerce

Dear Grimsby Business Owner or Senior Manager,

Your participation in the BR&E survey is critical to the development of a Grimsby-specific action plan representing the needs of local businesses. If you have any questions or concerns on completing this survey please contact us at lets.talk.business@grimsby.ca

The Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee, with support from the Ontario Government (OMAFRA), Regional Economic Development, St. Catharines Enterprise Centre and Director of Economic Development, and the Grimsby Chamber of Commerce have all come together to implement a Business Retention and Expansion initiative focused on **improving the Grimsby community as a place to do business.**

PARTICIPATE, COLLABORATE AND STAY INFORMED

Sincerely,
Susan Manuel, GEDAC BR&E Project Coordinator
Rebecca Shelley, Executive Director Grimsby Chamber of Commerce

TOWN OF GRIMSBY | 160 Livingston Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 4G3 | Phone: 905-945-9634 • Fax: 905-945-5010

SURVEY AVAILABLE NOW!

Visit the Town of Grimsby website to register & complete your business survey.
www.grimsby.ca

PARTICIPATE, COLLABORATE, STAY INFORMED

In partnership with the Grimsby Chamber of Commerce

Join local businesses who have participated in SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER!

SURVEY ENDS SEPTEMBER 30TH

Have Your Voice Heard

In addition to the "Let's Talk Business" portal creation, survey implementation, promotional advertising and ongoing communication with local businesses, the project team provided regular updates to Council and hosted an educational session in partnership with OMAFRA to answer any questions Councilors had regarding the BR&E initiative. Initial survey feedback indicated that local businesses needed greater COVID-19 business support from the Town. This prompted the project team to create a webpage dedicated to providing information and links to government grants, free employee training, PPE distributors, and other resources on the Town of Grimsby website.

Between May 20th and September 30th 2021, 32 surveys were completed. Data gathered was analyzed by the project team and helped identify major issues, themes and priorities that were discussed during the Task Force Retreat, which took place with local Grimsby businesses on October 20th. Both the survey feedback and retreat discussions helped influence the creation of the action plan detailed at the end of this report.

To help make the survey more accessible to businesses and increase survey completion, the project team added 30 Second Quick Poll Survey's on September 9th. The Quick Poll Survey was comprised of the following four questions to ensure the project team collected additional information about how the Town can best assist local businesses going forward.

The four 30 Second Quick Poll Survey questions included the following:

1. **What is your top concern looking forward?**
2. **Which business support/resources do you most require currently?**
3. **What is your general impression of this community as a place to do business?**
4. **Which Town of Grimsby department do you feel needs the most improvement towards supporting local businesses?**

Various marketing pieces were introduced to help promote the Quick Poll Survey. Bi-weekly social media posts advertised the introduction of the short survey, a direct newsletter was sent to community members subscribed to the Let's Talk Business Survey Page, the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce promoted the short survey to its members and a press release was published on the Town website. In total, 40 Quick Poll Surveys were submitted.



LET'S TALK BUSINESS

• UPDATE •

TOWN OF GRIMSBY BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION INITIATIVE

30 SECOND SURVEY AVAILABLE NOW

**We've made it easier for local businesses
to share their feedback with us.**

**Complete the 30 second quick poll BR&E Survey
to tell us how WE CAN SUPPORT YOU!**



To participate, visit:

www.letstalkgrimsby.ca/lets-talk-business

If you require accommodation or further program support, please contact us
letstalkbusiness@grimsby.ca or 905-945-9634



In summary, the efforts to drive survey participation from May 20th, through to September 30th 2021 included:

OMAFRA Survey launched: “Let’s Talk Business” site on the Town of Grimsby website May 20th

Four full & half page advertisements ran in two local papers in April and May

Over fifteen unique social media posts were created by the project team and shared by Town of Grimsby and Chamber of Commerce twice per on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Topics included:

- BR&E Program Launch
- BR&E Survey Launch
- COVID-19 Business Supports
- Business Products and Services
- Successful Reopening
- Mental Health in the Workplace
- Local Business Raffle
- Last Chance
- Last Chance
- 30 Second Quick Poll Survey
- Next Steps

Survey availability extended from the end of July until the end of September

Multiple direct to business mailings in July, August and September

Town of Grimsby news feed updates

Let’s Talk Business subscriber updates

4 question Quick Poll Survey launched in September

350+ businesses individually emailed to encourage participation in early September

Town Chief Administrative Officer made direct calls to manufacturing and industrial sector businesses

Project Timeline



Survey Results

Comprised of eight major sections (Business Information, COVID-19 Recovery, Business Climate, Future Plans, Business Development, Workforce, Community Development and Grimsby Specific), as well as seven sector specific sections for respective businesses (Agriculture, Local Food, Manufacturing, Mining, Natural Resource, Retail and Tourism), the BR&E survey provided confidential, detailed business information that was reviewed by the project team and will help inform the upcoming Economic Development Strategy.

While survey participation was low, businesses that did participate in the BR&E initiative came from various industries, which included:



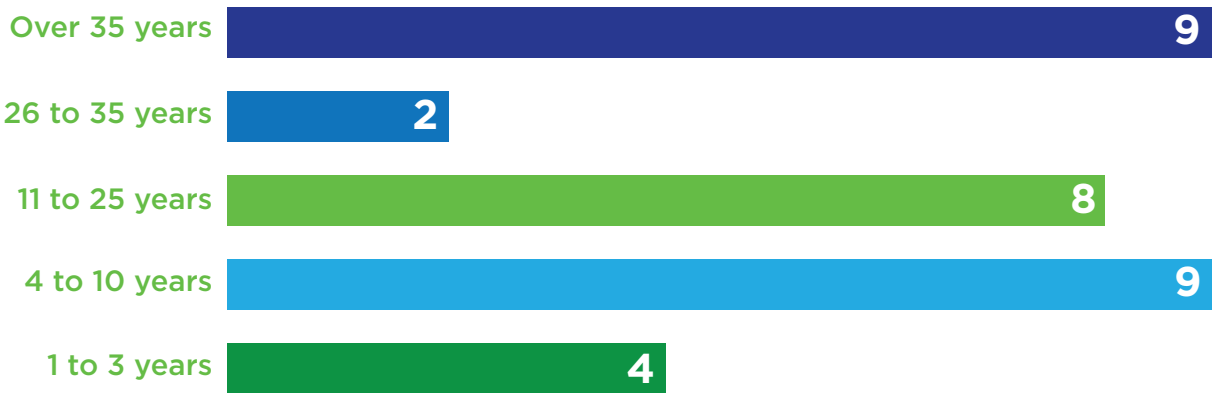
With such diverse business industry participation, survey results provided a broad view of local businesses.

Business Information

Within the Business Information section of the BR&E survey, responses to questions helped create a profile of Grimsby’s locally-based businesses as well as the jobs created by them.

Figure 1 demonstrates that the Town has a healthy mix of young to maturing levels of business. The majority of businesses that participated in the survey have either been operating in Grimsby for over 35 years (28.1%) or 4 to 10 years (28.1%).

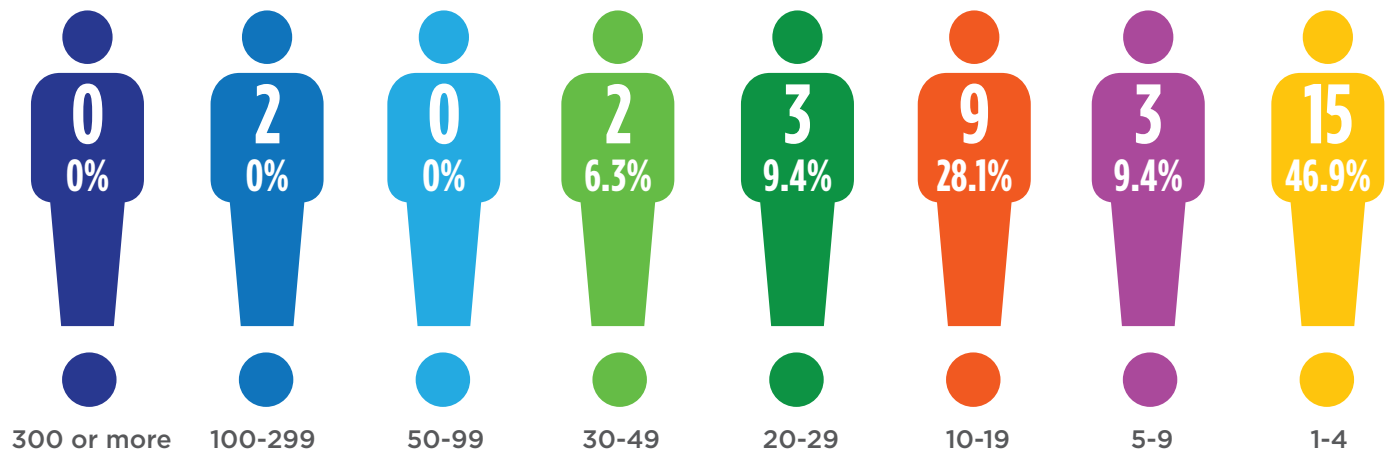
Figure 1: Years in operation in Grimsby



A vast majority of business owners (96.9%) are involved in the day-to-day operations of their business, with 81.3% of businesses reporting that at least one of the owners is a resident of the Grimsby community.

In terms of employment, 56% of businesses reported that they employ 19 employees or less, while 44% employ more than 20 employees (**Figure 2**). Of the 32 businesses that participated in the BR&E survey, zero indicated that they have a workforce of 100 employees or more.

Figure 2: Number of Employees



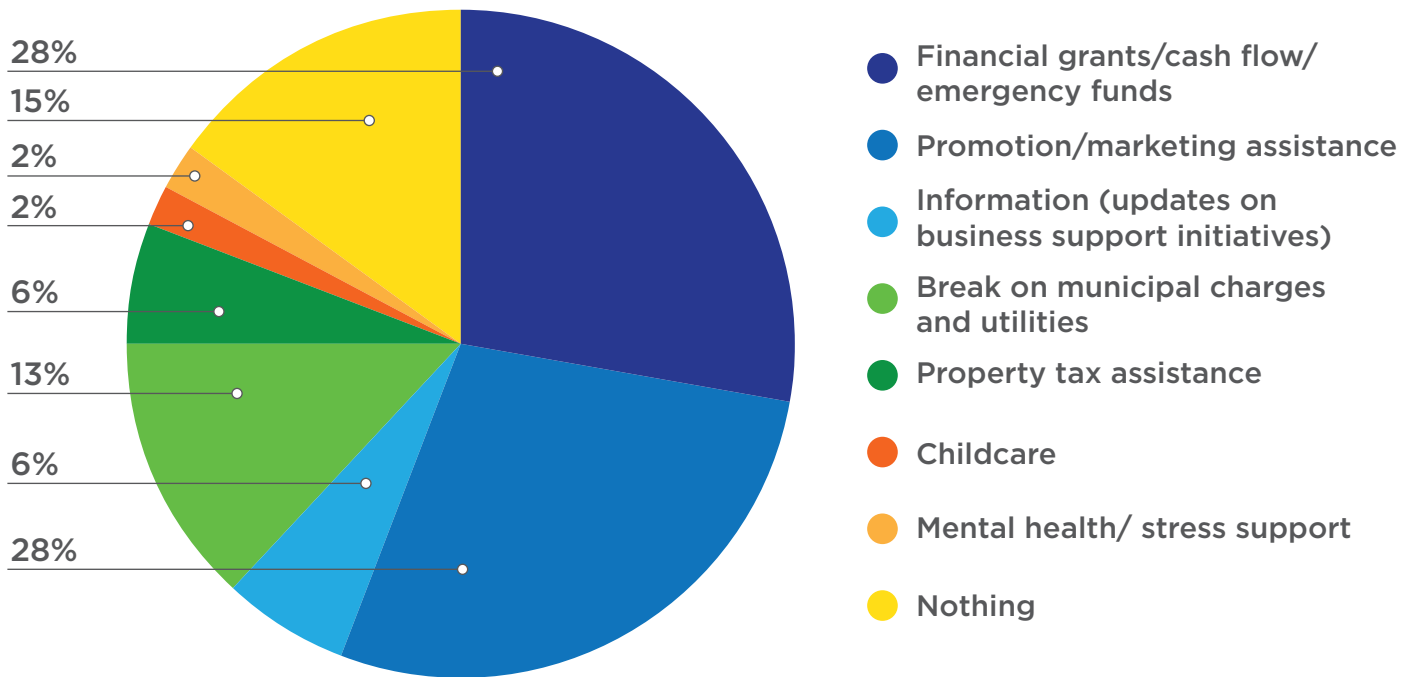
Question Options

COVID-19 Recovery

COVID-19 has presented various challenges for Grimsby’s local business community. From shut downs, to the introduction of public health and safety measures, and having to alter how products and services are delivered to consumers, each business in Grimsby has been challenged to alter the way in which they do business.

While there are many business supports and resources that the local business community requires, **Figure 3** shows that financial grants/cash flow/emergency funds, promotion/marketing assistance and a break on municipal charges and utilities are the top three supports and resources currently required. In comparison, the top three answers provided on the Quick Poll Survey were: financial grants/cash flow/emergency funds, promotion /marketing assistance and information (updates on business support initiatives).

Figure 3: Business support/resources most required currently



Of the 32 businesses that participated in the BR&E survey, 19 indicated that employee stress/health was a top concern for employers. Decreasing consumer confidence/spending was identified as the second concern and a Global or Canadian recession was third as shown in **Figure 4**.

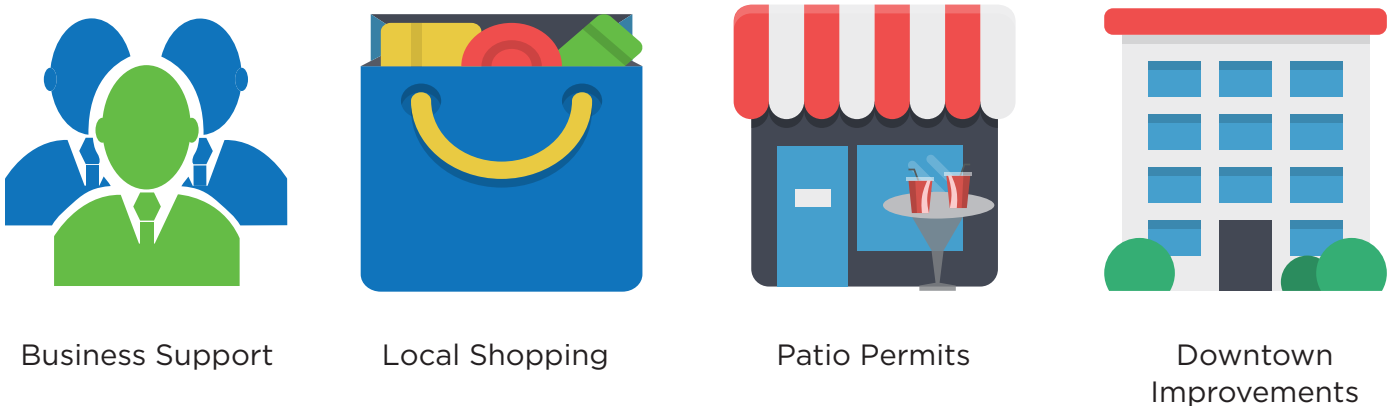
Figure 4: Top Three Concerns Looking Forward



Workforce Reduction and supply chain disruptions were also significant as they ranked as the fourth and fifth concerns as reported by 14 and 13 survey respondents, respectively. Responses to the Quick Poll Survey indicated that the top three concerns were decreasing consumer confidence/spending, supply chain disruptions, and available workforce and employee stress/health tied for the third top concern.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges for the local business community, it has also brought opportunity as well. Local shopping, patio permits, vibrant downtown improvements and business support were identified as the biggest economic opportunity for the community’s recovery, as depicted in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5: Economic Opportunities for Grimsby’s COVID-19 Recovery

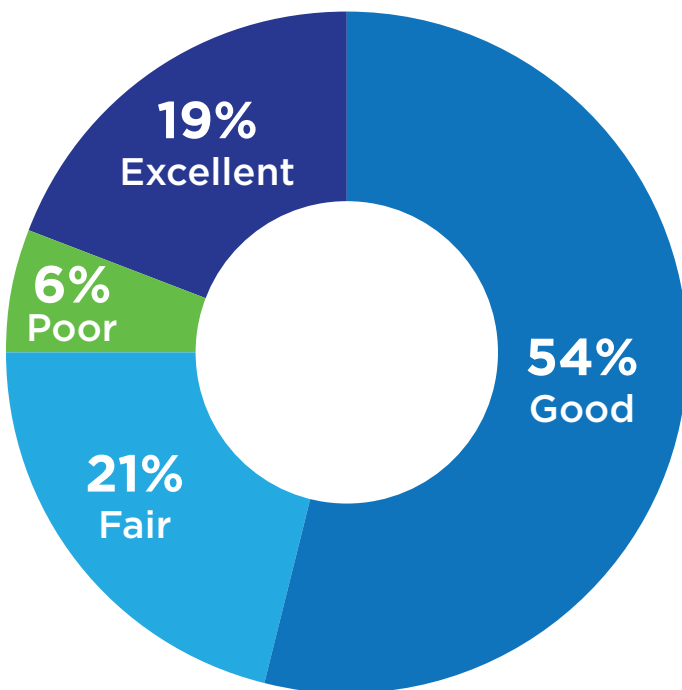


Business Climate

Business climate questions relate to the overall impression of the community as a place to conduct business, as well as the level of satisfaction with various community-based services and local government offerings.

The overall business climate in Grimsby was viewed as positive with 73% of business owners rating the Town as a “good to excellent” place to do business, while 27% reported having a more negative impression (**Figure 6**). Most respondents (47%) indicated that their impression of Grimsby had remained unchanged in the last three years, while 31% reported having a more negative impression from three years ago (**Figure 7**).

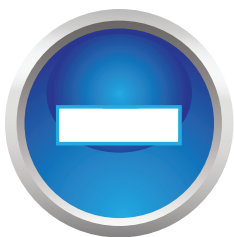
Figure 6: Impression of Grimsby as a Place to do Business



Reasons for positive change in attitude: increased population, community supported and encouraged businesses throughout COVID-19 shutdowns, involved community, Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce support.

Reasons for negative change in attitude: big box retailers, lack of Town leadership, increased population growth without an increase in jobs to accommodate, lack of parking, over-representation of Downtown businesses, lack of consumers.

Figure 7: Change in Attitude



46.9%
No change



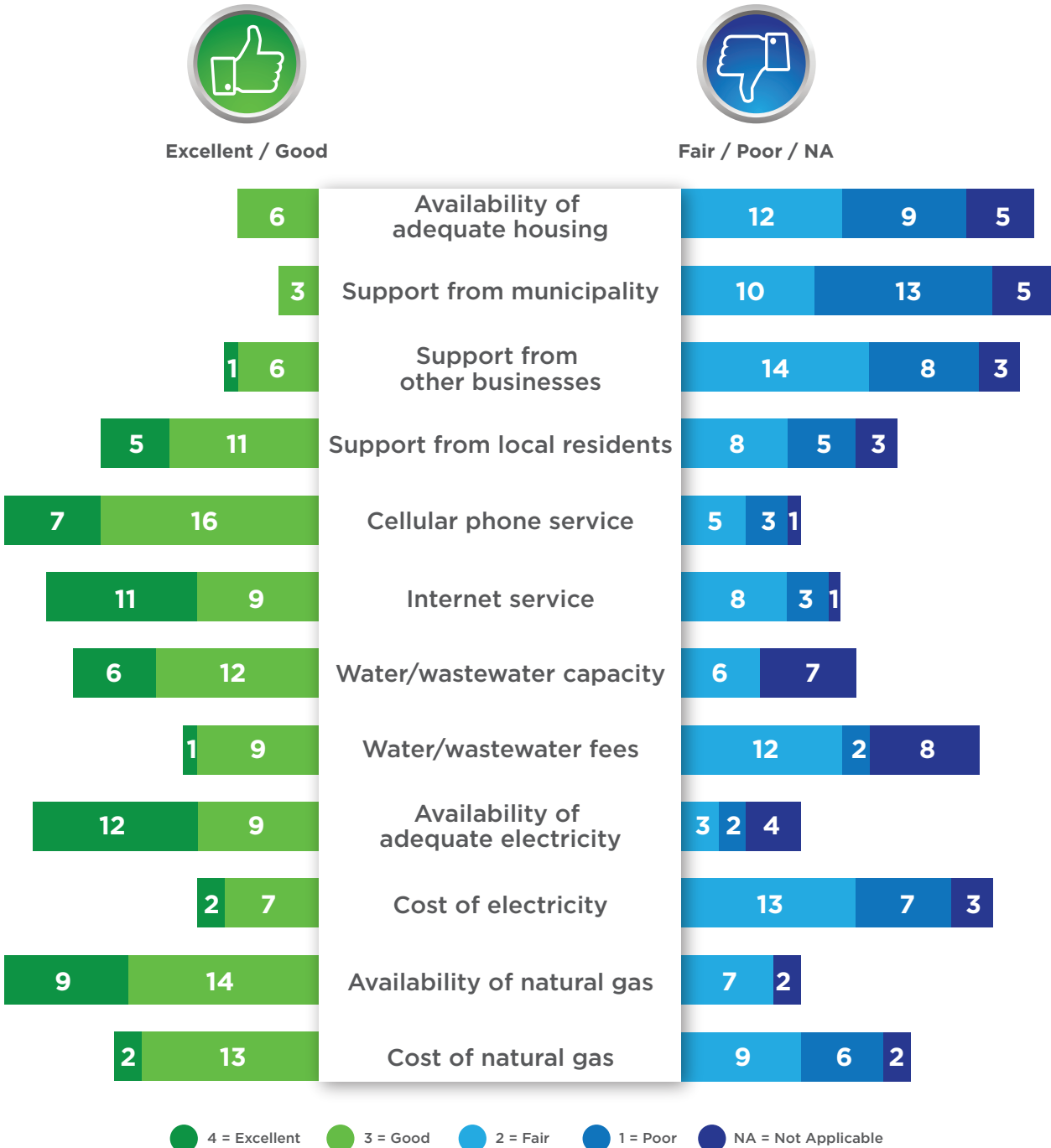
31.3%
Yes, more negative



21.9%
Yes, more positive

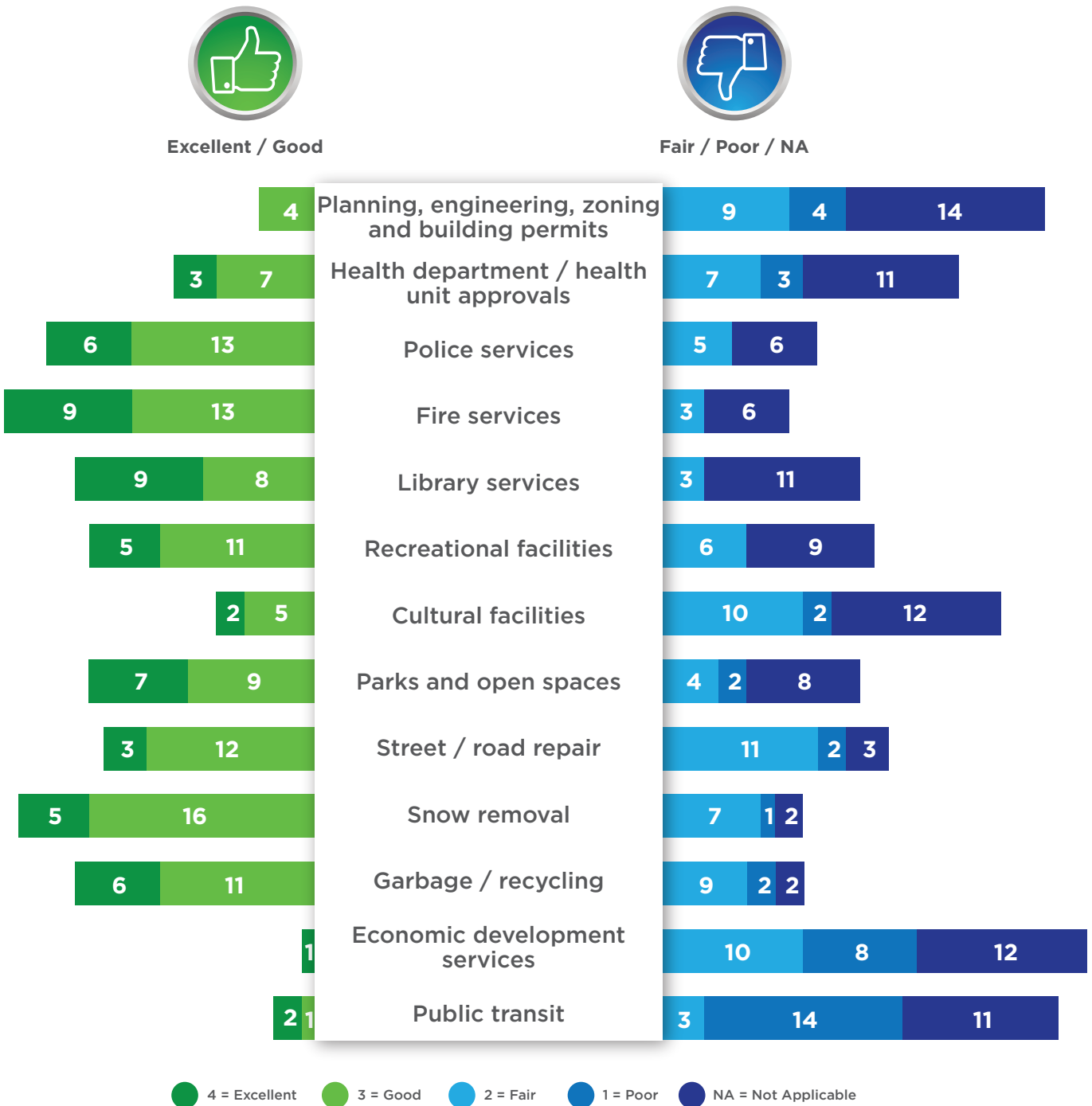
As demonstrated in **Figure 8**, businesses were also surveyed on a number of factors of doing business in Grimsby. The top five factors for doing business in the community ranked as “good to excellent” were: availability of natural gas, cell phone service, availability of electricity, internet service and water/wastewater capacity. Most commonly identified negative factors of doing business in the community included: support from municipality, support for other businesses, adequate housing, cost of electricity and cost of natural gas.

Figure 8: Change in Attitude



Businesses were surveyed on their level of satisfaction with a broad range of municipal services. As **Figure 9** demonstrates, municipal services generating a strong response and high satisfaction rating included: fire services, snow removal, garbage/recycling, police services and library services. Economic development services, public transit, street/road repair and planning, engineering, zoning and building permits received somewhat higher levels of dissatisfaction.

Figure 9: Level of Satisfaction with Municipal Services

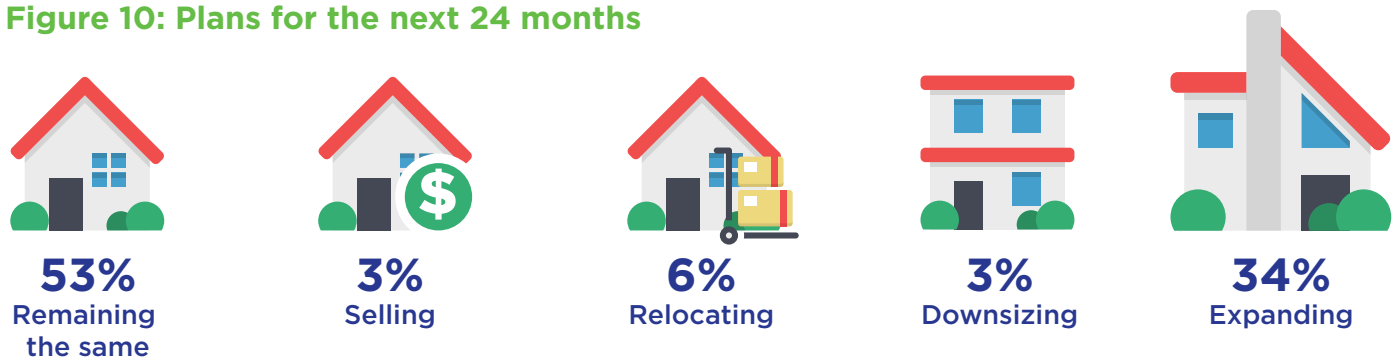


Future Plans & Business Development

Business owners were asked to advise on their future operational plans, including expansion or downsizing expectations. In spite of the challenges presented by COVID-19, Grimsby-based businesses were generally very positive about their future prospects.

Results indicated that 35% of local businesses are planning to expand in the next 24 months and 53% plan to remain the same (**Figure 10**). The main reasons listed as the causes for potential expansion of local businesses included increased sales, the need for logistic space, increased product demand, and the need to expand as the Grimsby population continues to grow.

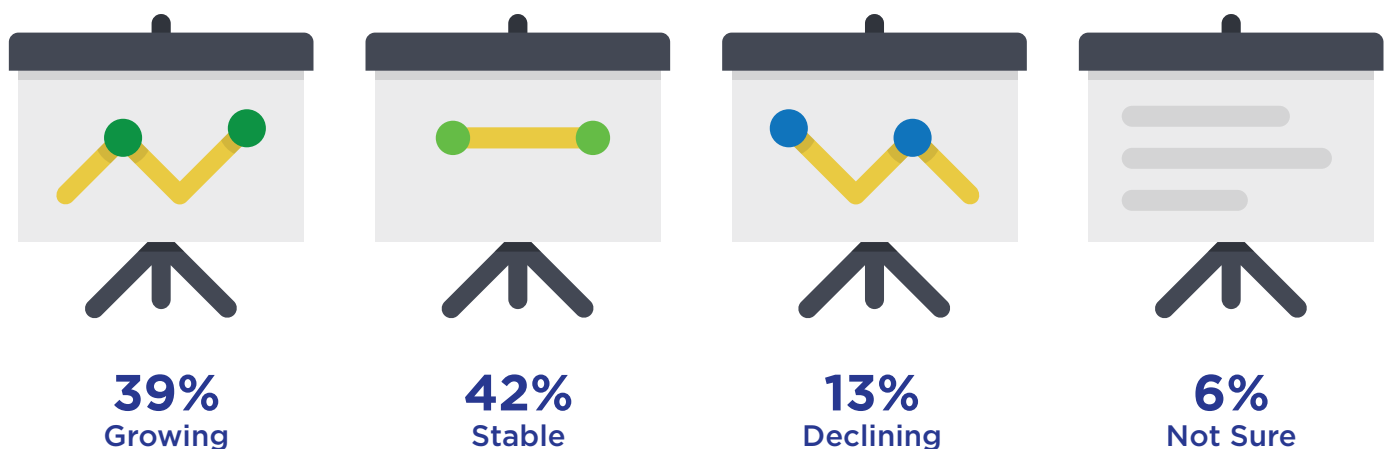
Figure 10: Plans for the next 24 months



The business development section of the survey provided feedback on the outlook for Grimsby businesses in general; the use of technology and its related barriers, as well as interest in utilizing a collaborative approach to business issues.

As **Figure 11** demonstrates, 81% of local businesses conveyed a positive outlook for their industry, reporting an outlook of either growing or stable, with only a small percentage (13%) indicating a decline. Reasons for anticipated industry growth included increased online sales broadening market opportunities, population growth, increased customer basis and demand for business product and services such as marketing and animal care services.

Figure 11: Industry Outlook



The majority of businesses (63%) rated their use of technology as high to very high (**Figure 12**). While a majority of survey participants indicated that they are currently experiencing no barriers related to their information technology requirements, internet speed and hardware/software support were noted as the top two areas of concern (**Figure 13**).

Figure 12: Use of Technology

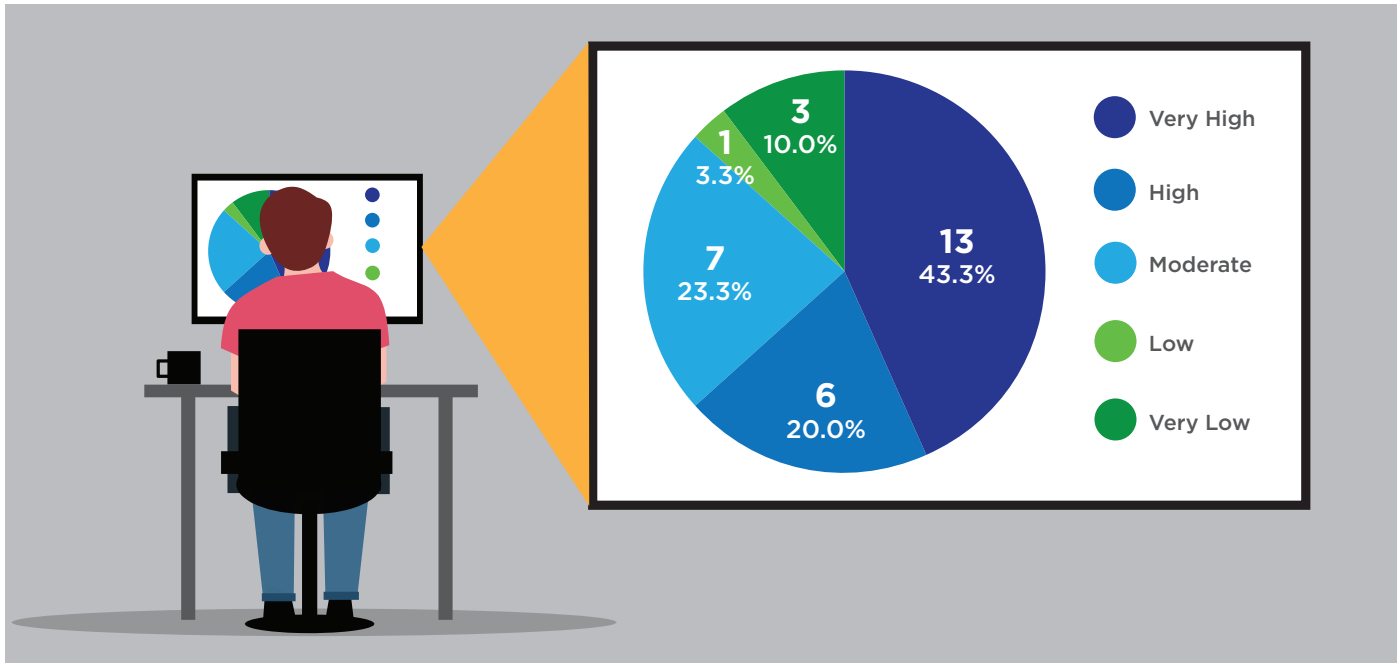
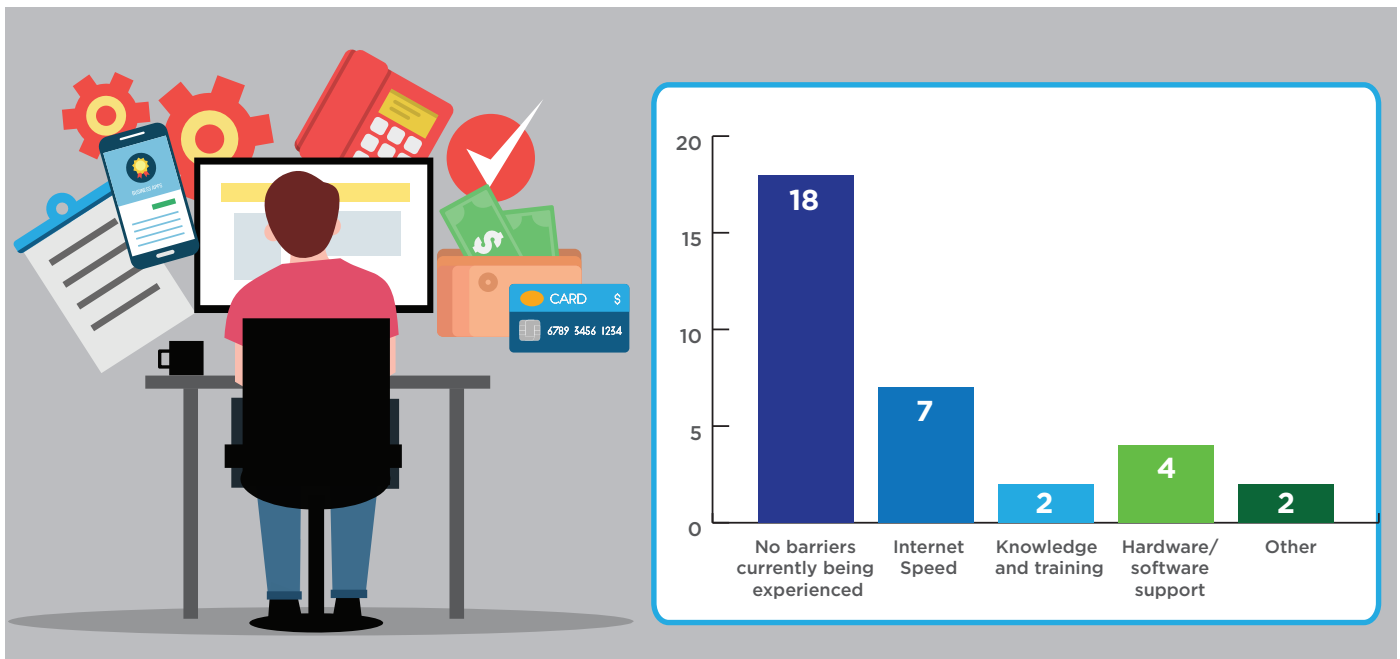
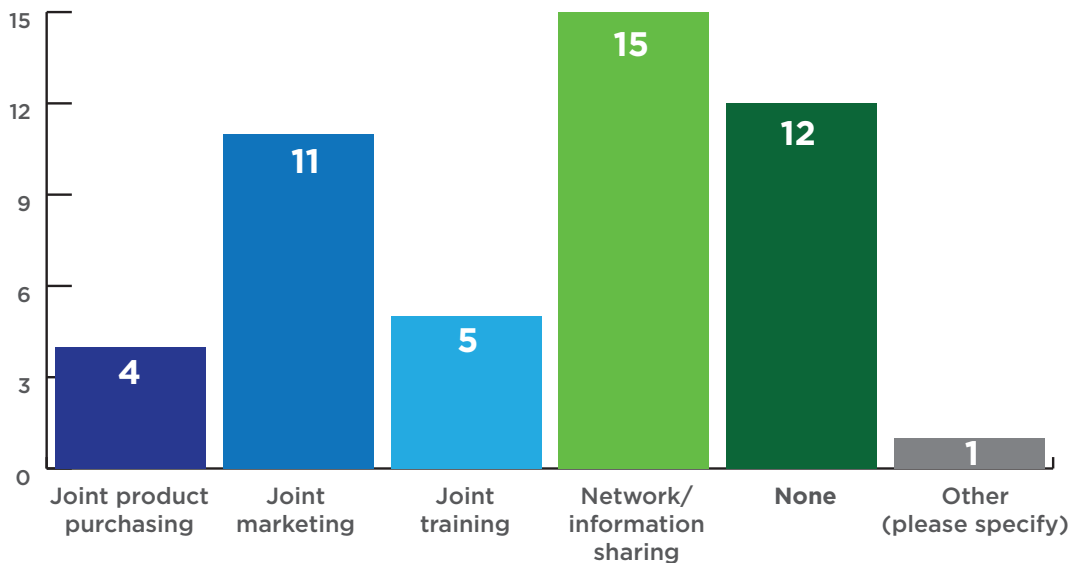


Figure 13: Barriers related to Information Technology Need



Although there was a moderate degree of interest in working collaboratively with other local businesses for the provision networking/information sharing (31%) and for joint marketing (23%), 25% of businesses did not express interest in collaborative approaches (**Figure 14**).

Figure 14: Interest in working co-operatively with other local businesses



Workforce

Workforce development questions provided an opportunity for business owners to advise of workforce patterns, identify issues related to labour force availability, attraction, retention and stability, and to identify barriers to workforce requirements.

As displayed by **Figure 15**, 45% of survey respondents indicated that during the last 3 years, the number of people their business employs has stayed the same. Comparatively, 36% reported that employment levels has increased, where as 19% reported that employment levels had decreased. The majority of respondents indicated that the availability of qualified workers was the top concern with the highest rating of “fair to poor”, stability of the workforce and the ability to attract new employees were tied as the second top concern (**Figure 16**).

Figure 15: Change in Workforce

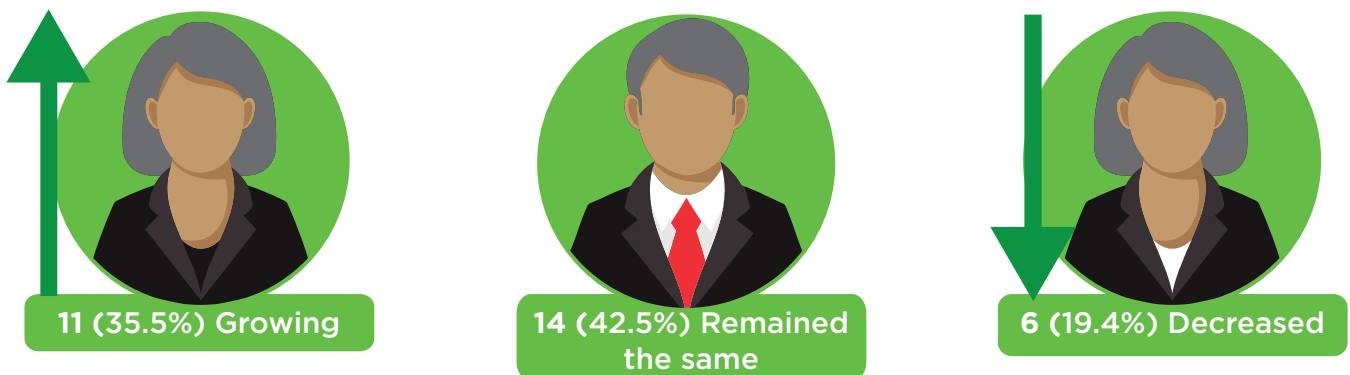


Figure 16: Rating of Workforce in Community for Business Needs



Of the local businesses that participated in the BR&E survey, 43% indicated that their business has had difficulty hiring employees. Too few applicants were listed as the top hiring challenge (41%), with lack of appropriate skills or training (30%) and lack of relevant experience (26%) as the second and third key area of concern (**Figure 17**). As depicted in **Figure 18**, Grimsby businesses use a variety of recruitment strategies, with personal networks, employment centres and websites, referrals from friends or current employees, and social media applications as the top methods of recruitment.

Figure 17: Hiring Challenges

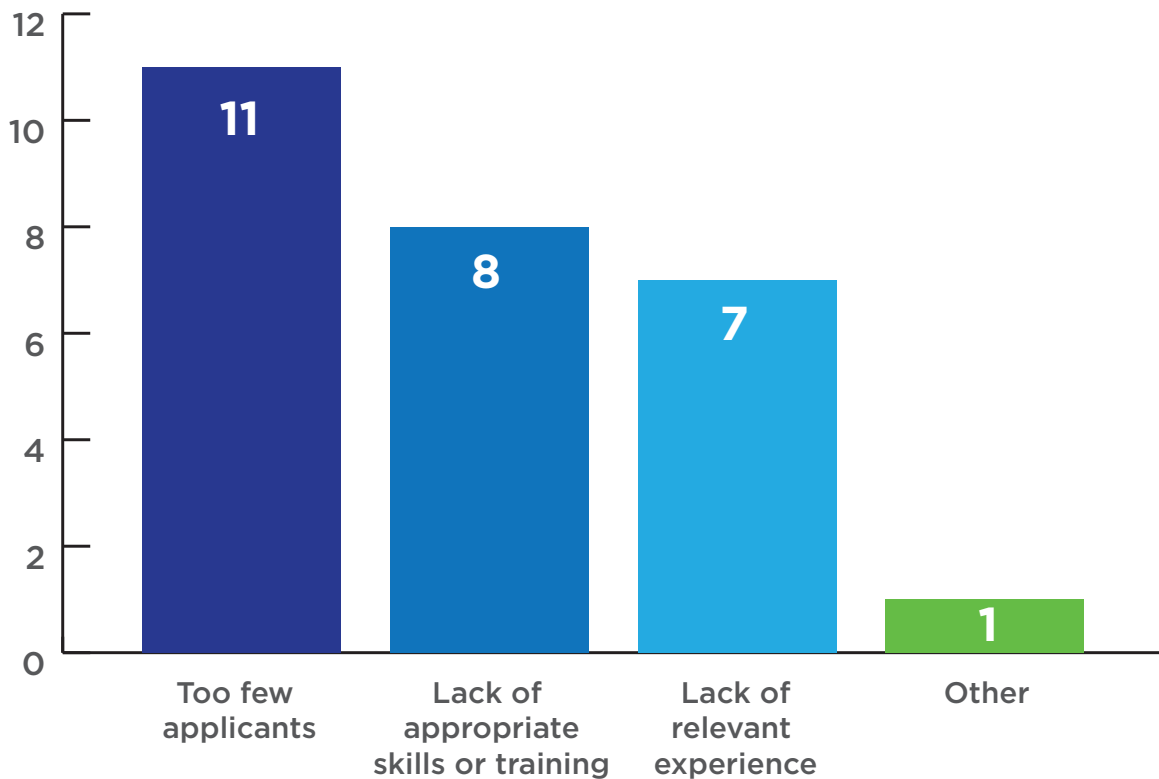
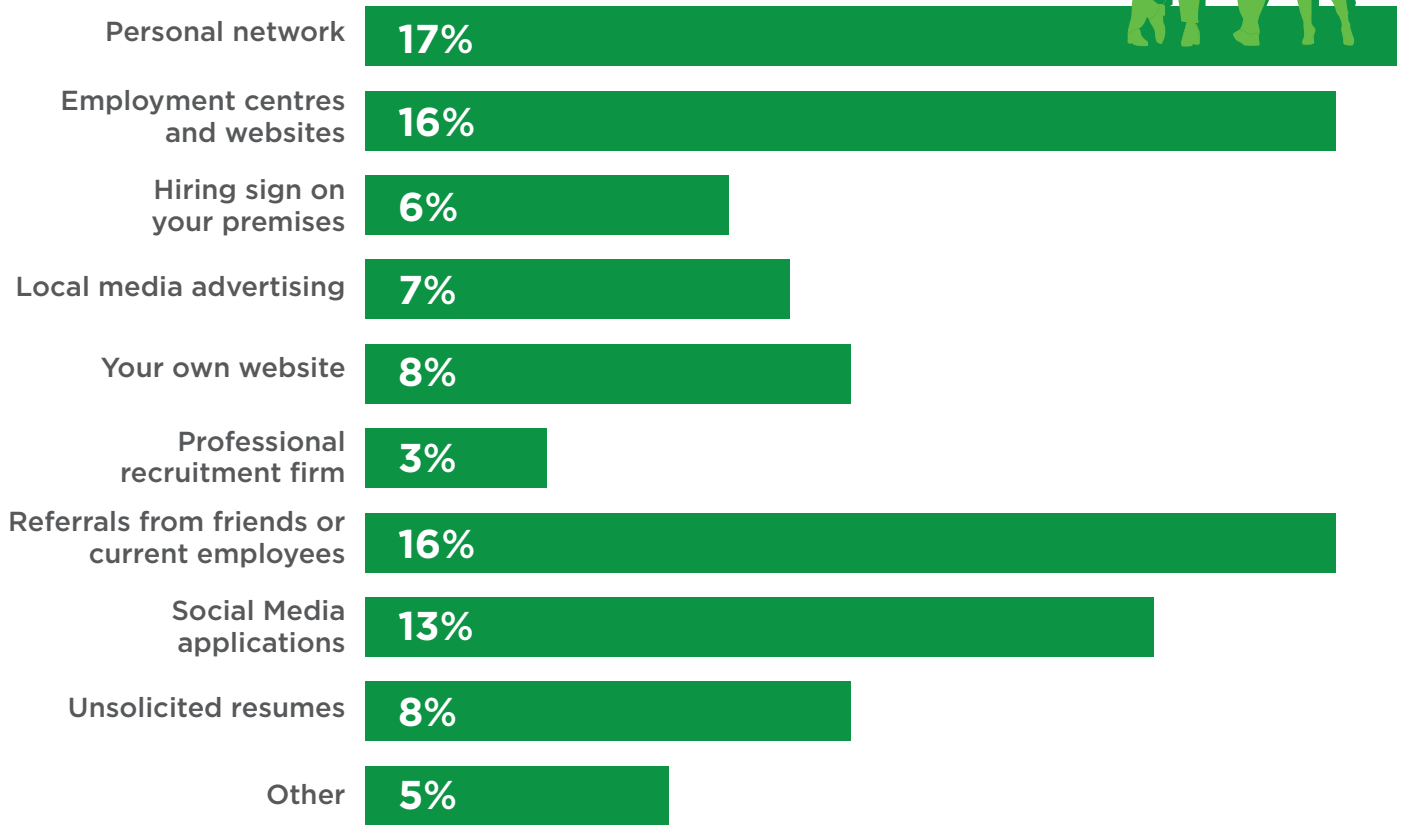




Figure 18: Methods of Recruitment



Workforce retention was not reported as a high concern for the local businesses that completed the BR&E survey. As depicted in **Figure 19**, 90% of businesses indicated that they do not have an issue with retaining employees. Of the businesses that did report workforce retention as an issue, wages were the top concern (**Figure 20**).

Figure 19:
Issues with Employee Retention

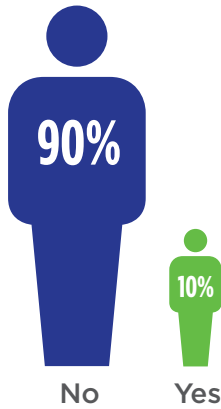
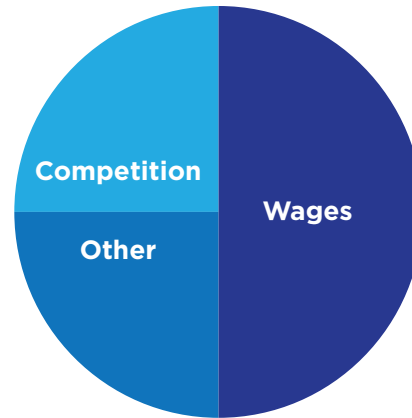


Figure 20:
Reasons for Retention Difficulties



Community Development

The Community Development section asked respondents to share Grimsby’s top three advantages and disadvantages as a place to do business, as well as the most significant changes businesses would like to see in the community over the next five years.

As **Figure 21** shows, the Grimsby community, quick access to the QEW, the Town’s socioeconomic ranking and walkability were listed as the top advantages. Parking, the Downtown Improvement Area, transit, Council and workforce access were noted as the top disadvantages (**Figure 22**). Increased parking, leadership, business and workforce recruitment and Council were the top changes businesses wish to see in the next five years (**Figure 23**).

Figure 21: Top 3 Advantages as a Place to do Business



Figure 22: Top 3 Disadvantages as a Place to do Business

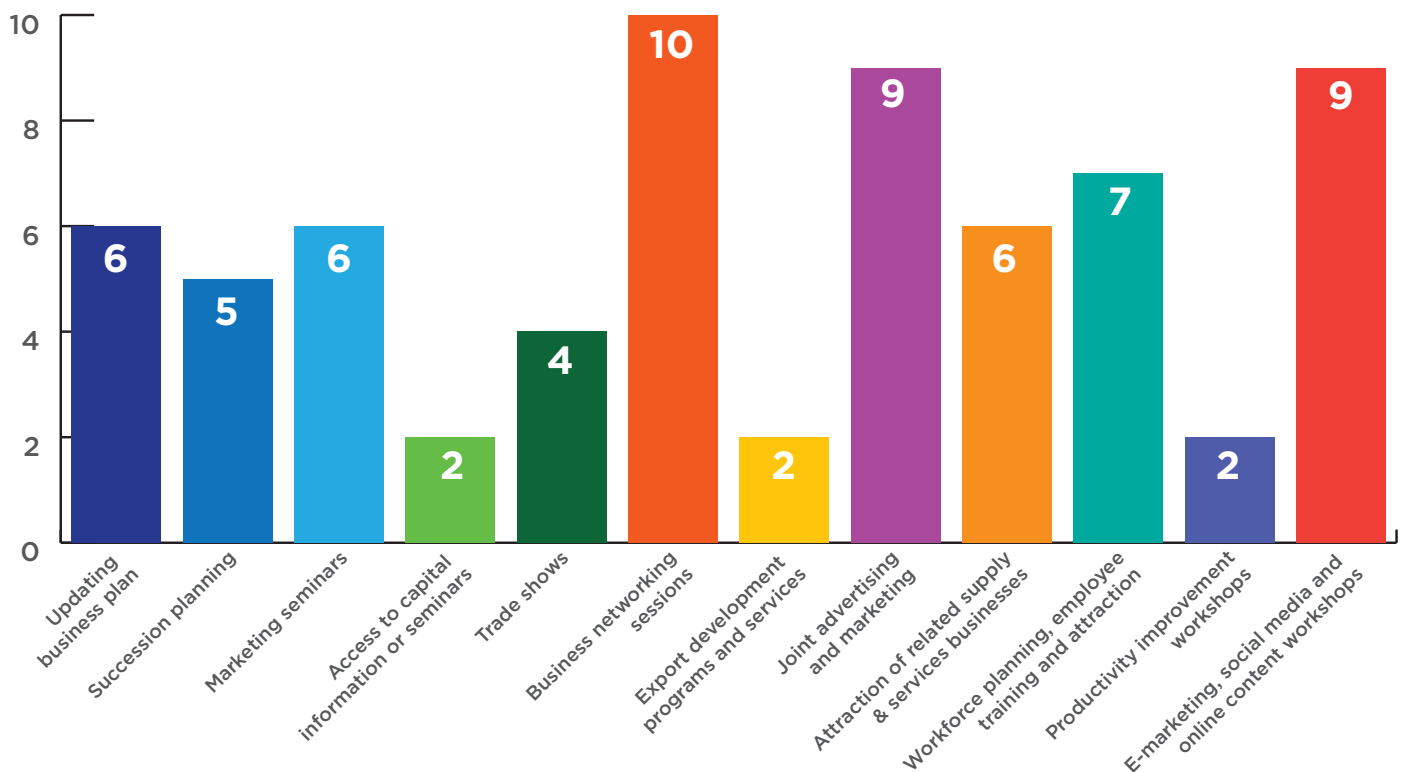


Figure 23: Most Significant Change Businesses Would Like to See in the Next 5 Years



Survey participants indicated business networking sessions, joint advertising/marketing and e-marketing, social media and online content workshops are the forms of assistance or opportunities that would be the most beneficial to support local businesses (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Assistance or Opportunities that Would Benefit Local Businesses



Grimsby Specific Community Questions

The Grimsby BR&E project team worked together to develop a series of questions directly related to owning and operating a business in Grimsby. Questions sought to determine how the Town can improve its relationships with local businesses and better support local economic growth moving forward.

Figure 25 depicts the level of satisfaction local businesses had during their most recent engagement with a Town department over the last 24 months. Mayor and Council were noted as the top area that requires improvement, with 35.7% of respondents indicating they were somewhat satisfied and 35.7% were not at all satisfied with their most recent engagement. Building was second with 33.3% of respondents indicating they were somewhat satisfied and 20% were not at all satisfied with their most recent engagement. Planning/Zoning was third with 26.7% of respondents indicating they were somewhat satisfied and 20% were not at all satisfied with their most recent engagement.

Figure 25: Satisfaction during Most Recent Town of Grimsby Department Engagement

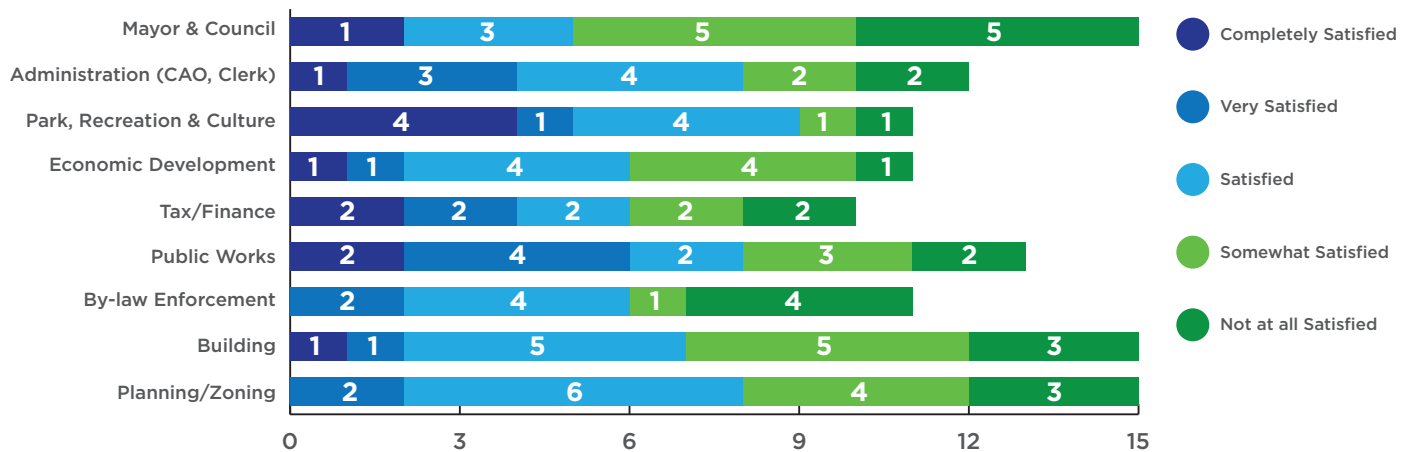
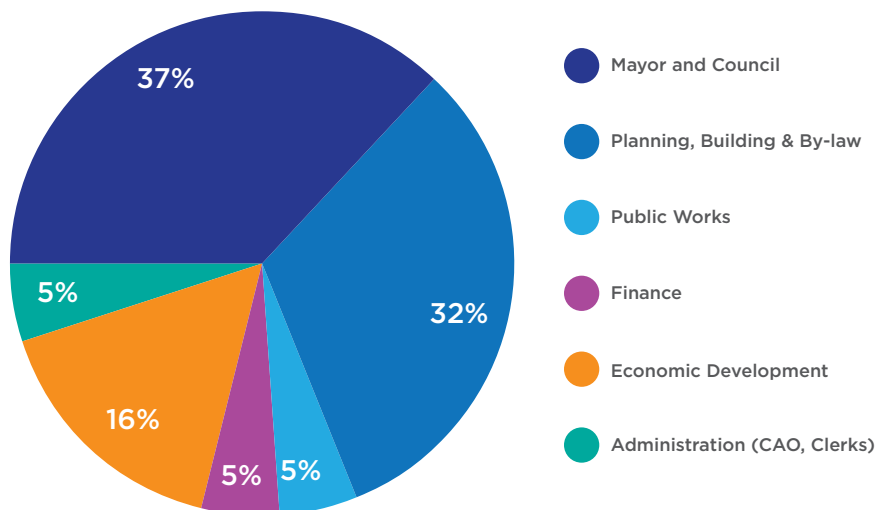


Figure 26: Town Departments that can Better Support Local Businesses

In comparison, responses to the quick poll question “Which Town of Grimsby department do you feel needs the most improvement towards supporting local business” indicated that the top areas of improvement include Mayor and Council (37%), Planning, Building and By-law (32%) and Economic Development (16%) (**Figure 26**).





Key Findings and Action Plan

Prior to launching the BR&E initiative, the project team was aware of some barriers that would negatively impact survey participation. These barriers included COVID-19 and survey fatigue. After the launch of the survey however, the project team learned of other factors that were contributing to low participation, including issues surrounding confidentiality and lack of confidence in Town Council to support initiatives through the BR&E process.

To mitigate these concerns, the BR&E project team created various marketing pieces, including social media posts and post cards mailed directly to local businesses to reassure them that all surveys submitted would remain confidential. Additionally, BR&E project members reached out to local businesses to reassure them that the Town would continue to engage and support the local business community after the BR&E project concluded. This included communicating that the findings from the BR&E survey would help inform the upcoming development of a Town of Grimsby Economic Development Strategy.

Task Force Retreat Findings

On October 20th, the BR&E project team hosted a virtual retreat with 6 local business representatives, Economic Development Professionals and GEDAC members to validate and discuss the results of the BR&E survey. Businesses reinforced that improving trust between local organizations, Grimsby businesses and the Town is critical in ensuring the local economy can continue to grow and flourish. Local business representatives also emphasized that access to public transit is a key factor in improving workforce attraction.

Results Achieved

In response to some of the key concerns raised by local businesses throughout the BR&E initiative, the Town of Grimsby engaged in various programs and campaigns to help better support the local business community.

Digital Main Street 2.0

From November 2020 through till June 2021, the Town of Grimsby participated in the Digital Main Street program, sponsored by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), Government of Ontario, Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) and the Government of Canada. By utilizing grant funds, the Town hired a Digital Squad Member who helped local brick and mortar businesses adopt online technologies in order to digitally transform their sales, marketing and back-office operations. The Squad Member also assisted 16 businesses in their application for a \$2,500 grant in order to make the digital improvements. This resulted in a total of \$40,000 funding being allocated to local downtown Grimsby businesses.

Digital Main Street 3.0

As a result of the success and positive community feedback on DMS 2.0, the Town applied and was approved to participate in the latest program rendition. Under DMS 3.0, all local brick and mortar businesses are eligible to participate in the program, not just those located in the downtown area. The program has been promoted to businesses via social media, press releases, Council announcements and direct mail, and will run from July 2021 through to February 2022.

Grimsby's Got It! Buy Local Campaign

To provide support to local businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their post-COVID recovery, the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce (COC), in partnership with the Town, launched a buy local campaign in June 2021, coined Grimsby's Got It! (GGI). The goal of the buy local campaign was twofold; it sought to increase traffic within local businesses by educating consumers on the importance of shopping local while, secondly, helping local businesses grow and stay in Grimsby.

The response to GGI from local businesses and residents was overwhelmingly positive. The GGI campaign improved communication and partnership between the COC, Town and local Grimsby businesses, as well as neighbouring business communities. In order to build upon the momentum gained from the campaign, the GGI project team will independently continue the program through to the end of 2021 year.

COVID-19 Business Supports Page

In response to initial BR&E survey feedback, a COVID-19 Business Support page was launched on the Town's website in May 2021. The page connects local businesses with valuable information regarding:

- Federal, Provincial & Municipal business grants
- Sourcing Personal Protective Equipment vendors
- Scheduling training & well-being workshops that focus on mental health in the workplace
- Regional and Provincial guidelines for businesses during COVID-19.

Action Plan

Opportunity - Enhanced Engagement with Local Businesses

Actions	Champions	Timeline	Performance Measure
<p>Follow-up Conduct immediate follow up and telephone outreach with any Red Flag businesses identified by the survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev 	2022 Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses contacted • Increased resources knowledge amongst local businesses
<p>Corporate Calling Program Develop a corporate calling program by visiting local businesses and investors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce • DIA • Mayor • CAO 	2022 Q2/Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses visited quarterly • Number of issues identified • Number of solved issues
<p>Business Directory Develop a Town of Grimsby Local Business and Services Directory to increase business promotion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce • Grimsby based businesses and organizations 	2022 Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new businesses that sign up to participate in the local directory • Number of Directory site visits from the public
<p>New Ec Dev Webpage Creation of a dedicated Economic Development webpage on the Town of Grimsby website to better communicate and share resources with local businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev 	2022 Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of webpage visits from the public • Number of local business uptake
<p>Advocacy Continued advocacy to provincial and federal governments for local business support via government grants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Corporate Leadership Team • Grimsby Council 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of provincial and federal grant programs for local businesses secured
<p>Newsletter Provide the business community with relevant information that will help them be successful by developing a subscription-based e-newsletter that shares info</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev 	2022 Q2/Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of feedback from subscribers to ensure relevant info is shared • Number of subscribers • Number of video newsletters distributed • Number of private businesses participating in the video newsletter

Opportunity - Workforce Development

Actions	Champions	Timeline	Performance Measure
<p>Job Fair Develop and deliver Job Fair to create awareness, interest and application to opportunities within Grimsby</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Grimsby Chamber of Commerce • Grimsby high schools • Grimsby based businesses and organizations 	<p>2022 Q3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses participating • Annually recurring job fair with growing number of businesses and attendees • Number of public participants • Number of matches found
<p>Marketing Continue marketing that helps to define Grimsby and celebrates the lifestyle benefits of the community value proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Grimsby Chamber of Commerce • Corporate Leadership Team 	<p>2022 Q3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction of residents and growth in available workforce over time • Number of employment opportunities over time
<p>Workforce Attraction Educate employers about attraction/recruitment resources available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Grimsby Chamber of Commerce • Niagara Workforce Planning Board • Federal/Provincial government 	<p>Ongoing (start 2022 Q1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of media impressions of services available to support employers • Number of reduced vacancies for business community over time • Increased utilization of job searching social media tools
<p>Transit Continue to enhance public transit accessible to Grimsby</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grimsby Ec. Dev • Niagara Region and local municipalities • Grimsby Council • Regional Council 	<p>2022 Q1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a enhanced transit system • Improved employee attraction reported by local businesses