

Kitimat Business Walk

Post-Walk Report

2016



KITIMAT
A Marvel of Nature and Industry



Kitimat
Chamber of Commerce

Background

The **2016 Kitimat Business Walk** was conducted during the afternoon of **Wednesday, October 26**. The Walk was conducted in partnership between the **District of Kitimat** and the **Kitimat Chamber of Commerce** with support from:

- **BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training**
- **WorkBC Employment Services Centre**
- **Kitimat Advisory Planning Commission**

A total of 12 participants were assembled to canvass local businesses in order to collect information about Kitimat's economic climate. Business support materials were also distributed during the walk.

Business walks are a tool to gather and track the pulse of local businesses and help community leaders identify measures and actions that ensure jobs, goods and services stay in a community.

Civic and business leaders gather information that enables them to identify and remove barriers to doing business in their municipality. Chambers of Commerce can use the walks to communicate the supports that are available to businesses and use the information gathered to tailor their services to meet the needs of their members.

Businesses were asked:

- Is your business growing, steady or shrinking?
- What do you like most about doing business in Kitimat?
- What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?
- What can be done to help your business thrive?
- What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

Methodology

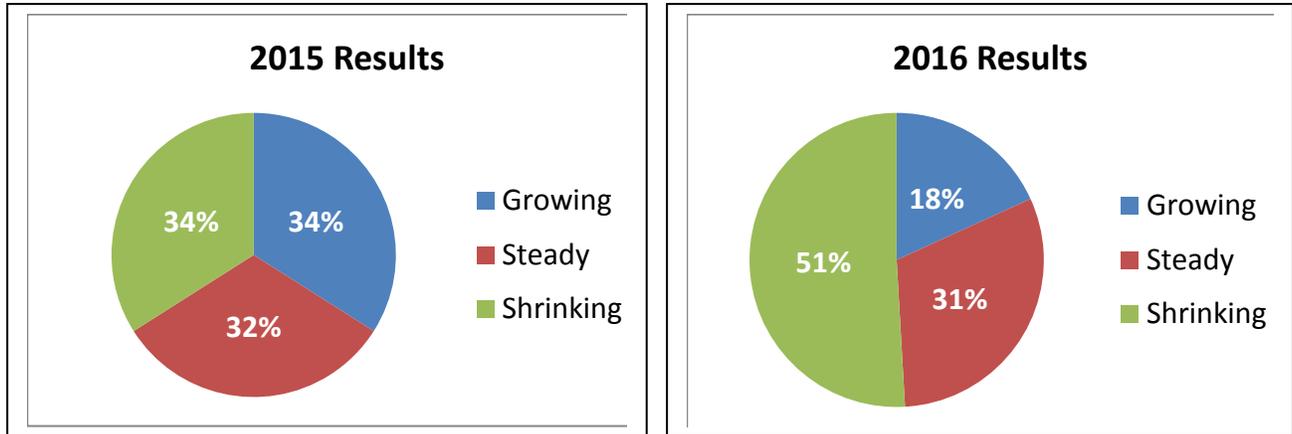
The individuals who participated in the Business Walk worked mainly in groups of two. The teams collectively visited and received responses from **55 businesses** over a three-hour period. The areas covered included City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre and a few businesses outside of these areas. The event was advertised in advance with a media release, a social media blitz and email alerts distributed to Chamber of Commerce members.



Findings

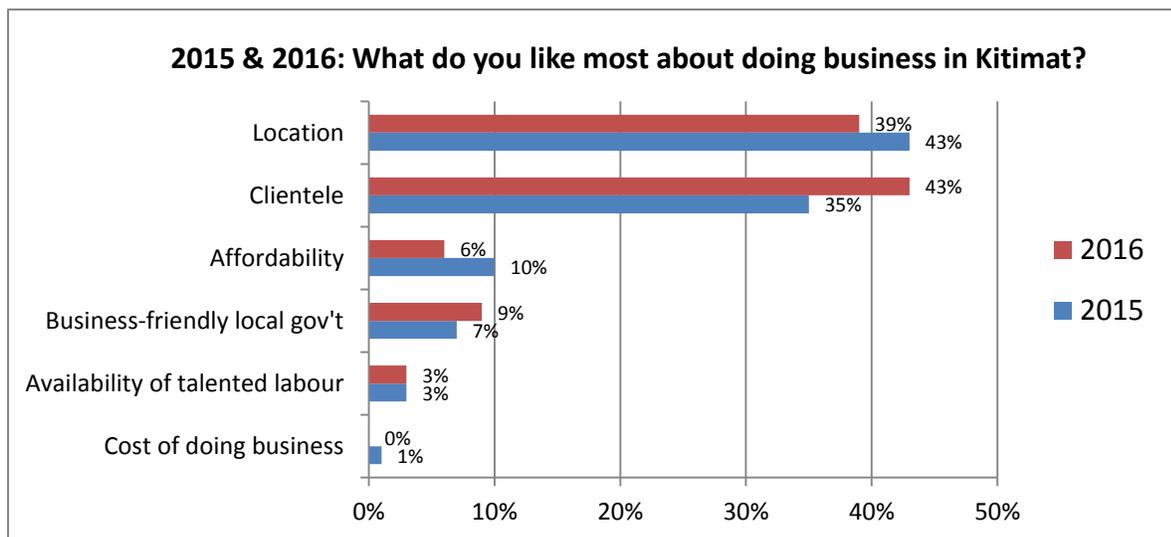
Question 1: Is your business growing, steady, or shrinking?

2016 results display that **fewer businesses are growing** and a **greater percentage of businesses are shrinking**. In 2016, less than half (49%) of respondents indicated that their business was either growing or remaining steady, compared to 66% in 2015. Several respondents attributed a decline in business growth to present circumstances of major industrial projects, including the completion of the Kitimat Modernization Project (KMP) and delayed LNG investment decisions.



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

Location and **Clientele** were the top reasons that local businesses enjoy operating in Kitimat. 2016 responses did not shift significantly from those provided in 2015, as detailed in the chart below.



Question 3: What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?

Businesses were able to provide multiple responses for this question. Results demonstrate that businesses faced similar challenges in 2016 as compared to 2015; however, the order of significance shifted.

In 2016, a **slow economic climate** was by far the most cited challenge with 63% of participant businesses identifying it. This was a significant increase from the 11% of businesses that identified it as a barrier in 2015.

The second most referenced business challenge in 2016 was **outside competition** with a 30% response rate, which was double the 15% that claimed it to be a barrier in 2015. Responses of this nature frequently referenced Terrace-based business and/or online competition.

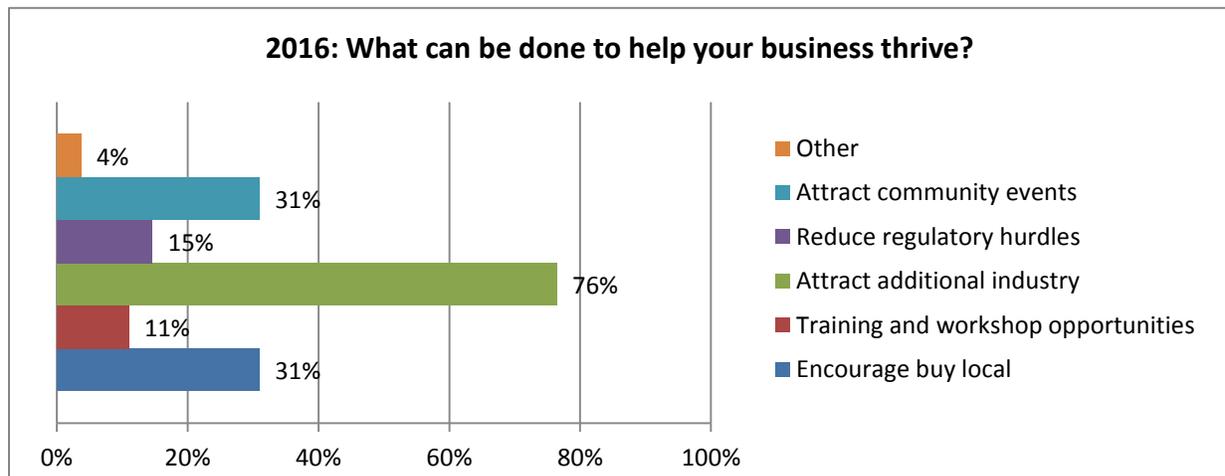
The third most cited challenge in 2016 was **attracting and/or retaining qualified employees**, for which 15% of businesses claimed to be a hurdle. This was perceived as less of a challenge than the previous year, when it was the most commonly identified impediment for businesses at 39%.

Question 4: What can be done to help your business thrive?

Businesses were able to list multiple options for this question.

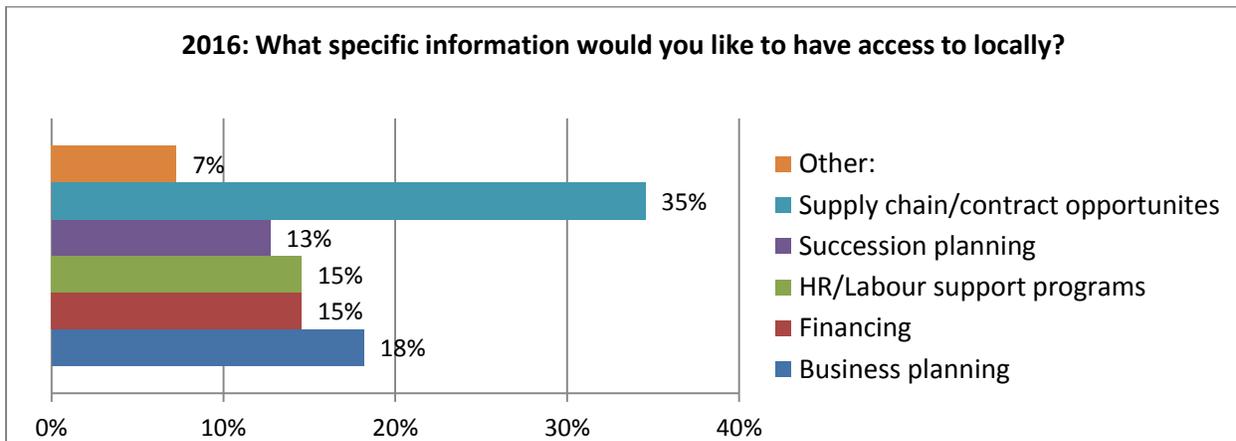
Results indicate that Kitimat's business community believe that **attracting additional industry** to the area is the activity that would be most beneficial to the local economy. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents cited attracting additional industry as a means of helping their business thrive. Participants consistently identified that commerce had slowed down following the completion of KMP and the delayed LNG activity.

Attracting community events and encouraging consumers to **shop local** were the second most commonly referenced actions that would help businesses succeed. Attracting and keeping dollars in the local economy were concerns for many participants.



Question 5: What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

Over two-thirds of businesses claimed that they would like to have greater access to **supply chain and contract opportunities**, making this by far the most common request for more information. This category was also the most cited category in 2015. Businesses were fairly evenly divided amongst other desired categories of information: **business planning, financing, HR and labour support programs** and **succession planning**.



What's next?

- The District of Kitimat will continue to work with local, regional and provincial partners in attempts to strengthen and diversify the local industrial base by supporting existing industry and attracting additional industry to the area.
- The District of Kitimat and the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce will work with the local business community to promote the benefits of shopping locally. The District will continue facilitating and growing the Love Kitimat program in partnership with Northern Development and participant businesses. The Chamber will work with member businesses to identify additional means of encouraging shop local activity.
- The District of Kitimat and the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce will seek out means of attracting and hosting additional events in Kitimat, as well as expanding tourism activity.
- The District of Kitimat and the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce will work with partners in order to deliver additional training and learning opportunities to Kitimat businesses, as well as identify means of raising awareness of supply chain and contract opportunities.



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