

# BUSINESS WALK REPORT

## KITIMAT 2021



## **Background**

The Business Walk is an information gathering campaign organized by the District of Kitimat's Economic Development Department and conducted in the fall each year. It is an opportunity for District staff, Kitimat Council, Kitimat Chamber of Commerce, and other community stakeholders to meet business owners/operators in-person to get a feel for the commercial sector in Kitimat. As many businesses as possible are visited in one afternoon to complete the short survey. Businesses that are missed are able to fill out the survey online at [www.kitimat.ca](http://www.kitimat.ca) until December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Survey results are compiled into this report which is forwarded to Council and made available online and at the Economic Development office in the new year.

## **2021 Business Walk**

In 2021 the Kitimat Business Walk was conducted during the afternoon of Tuesday, November 2. Six participants canvassed local businesses to collect information about Kitimat's economic climate. Participants were from:

- Kitimat Chamber of Commerce
- District of Kitimat

Businesses were asked:

- Is your business growing, steady or shrinking?
- What do you like most about doing business in the area?
- What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?
- What can be done to help your business thrive?
- What resources would help you with your business?

In order to include as many businesses as possible in the survey, businesses were also given the opportunity to provide input on the questions online. The online survey was made available on the District of Kitimat website for one month.

A total of 57 surveys were collected, in person and online, by December 2, 2021.

## **Methodology**

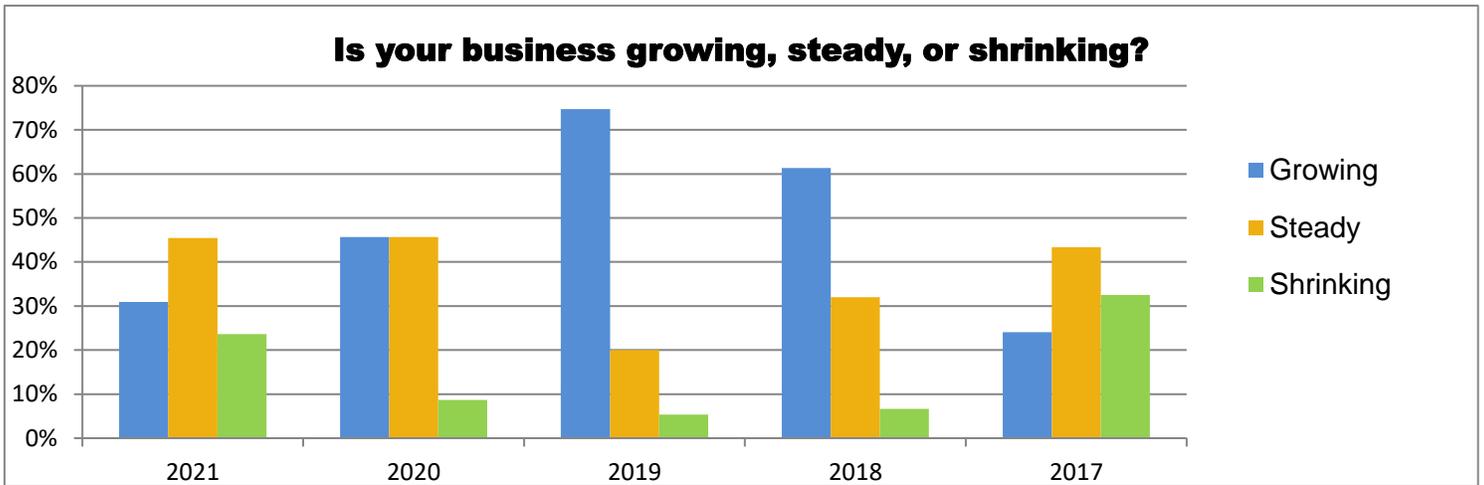
Areas covered by the participants in-person included City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre and a few businesses outside of these areas.

The event was advertised in advance on the District of Kitimat website, social media, and through the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce E-Blast.

## SURVEY RESULTS

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

Compared to 2019, perception that businesses are growing in Kitimat has been decreasing. A larger number of businesses compared to 2020 say that they are shrinking, and a consistent amount from the year previous say that they are steady. While the decrease in the number of businesses that say they are ‘growing’ from 2019 may seem worrisome, the economic activity that happened around LNG Canada’s final investment decision may have accounted for the 2018/2019 surge, with business growth now showing a slight levelling off.

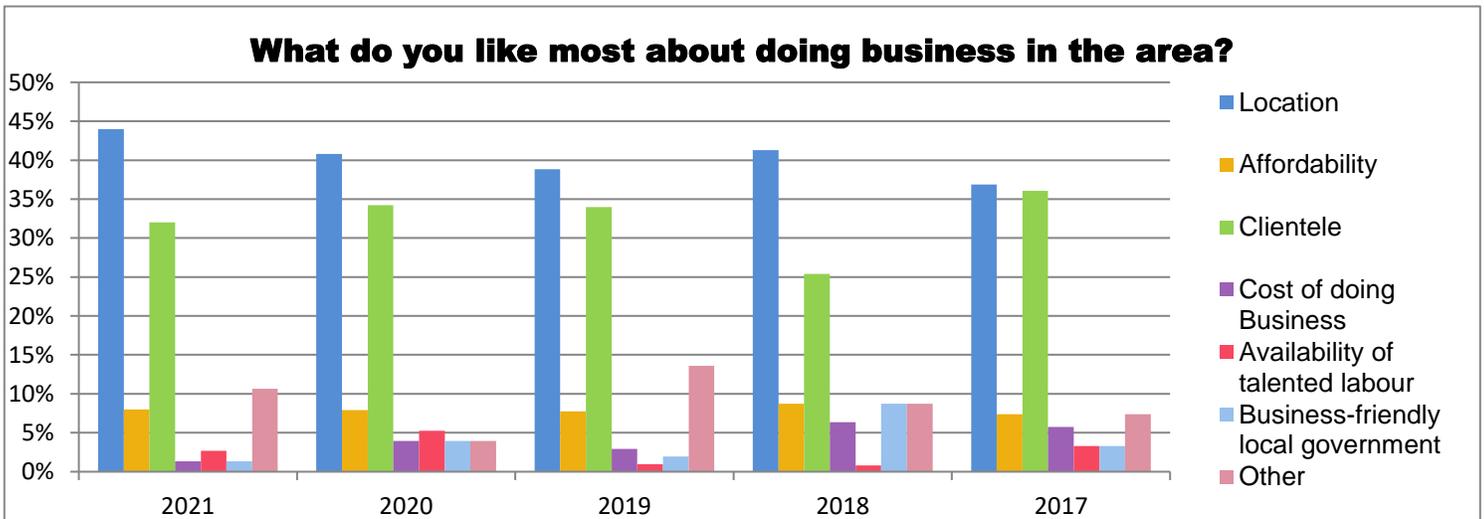


### Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the area?

Location and clientele remain the top reasons local businesses enjoy operating in Kitimat. This is a testament to the strong sense of ‘place’ and community felt by residents and business owners.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- “Love the Community”
- Accessibility

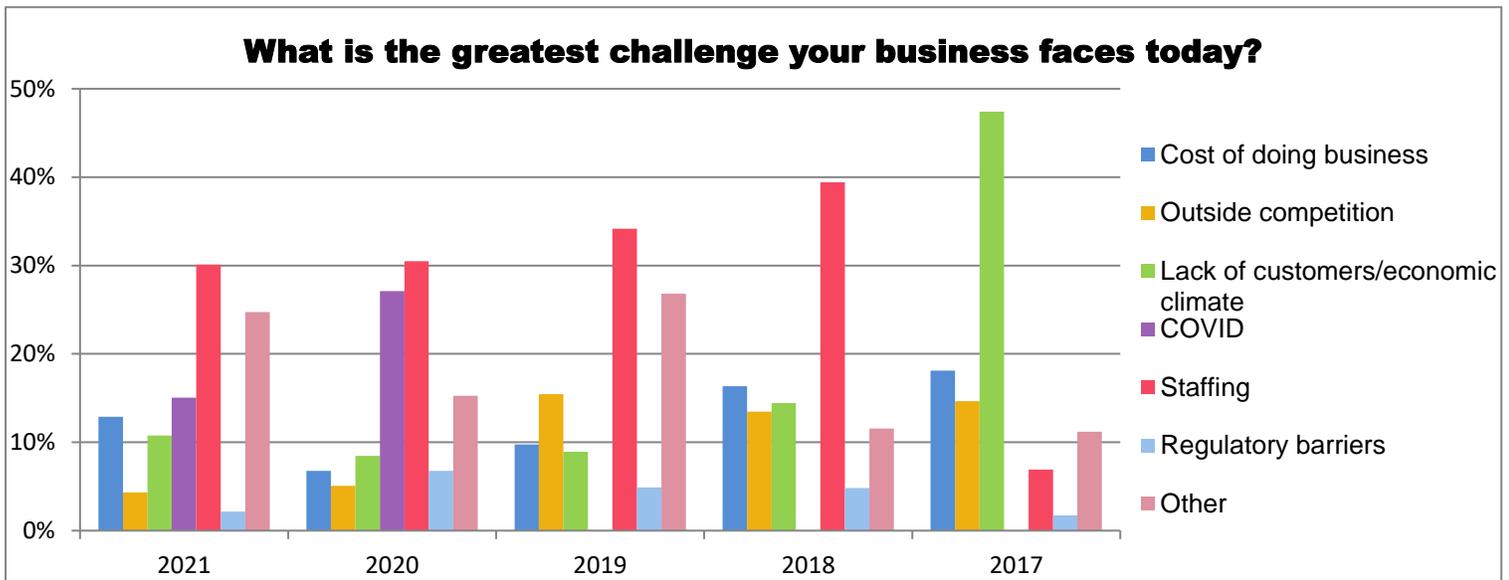


### Question 3: What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?

Staffing remains a consistent challenge experienced by businesses year over year, since 2018. Covid-19 and supply chain issues have triggered 'cost of doing business' as a challenge that businesses have had to face, compared to 2020. Businesses and residents should also recognize the drastic change from 2017, where 'lack of customers/economic climate' plummeted as a concern for local businesses, and has remained only a minor concern since then.

Some responses under the "Other" category include:

- Supply chain issues
- Labour disruptions with Rio Tinto BC Works
- Storefront visibility
- Skilled labour shortage in specialized careers



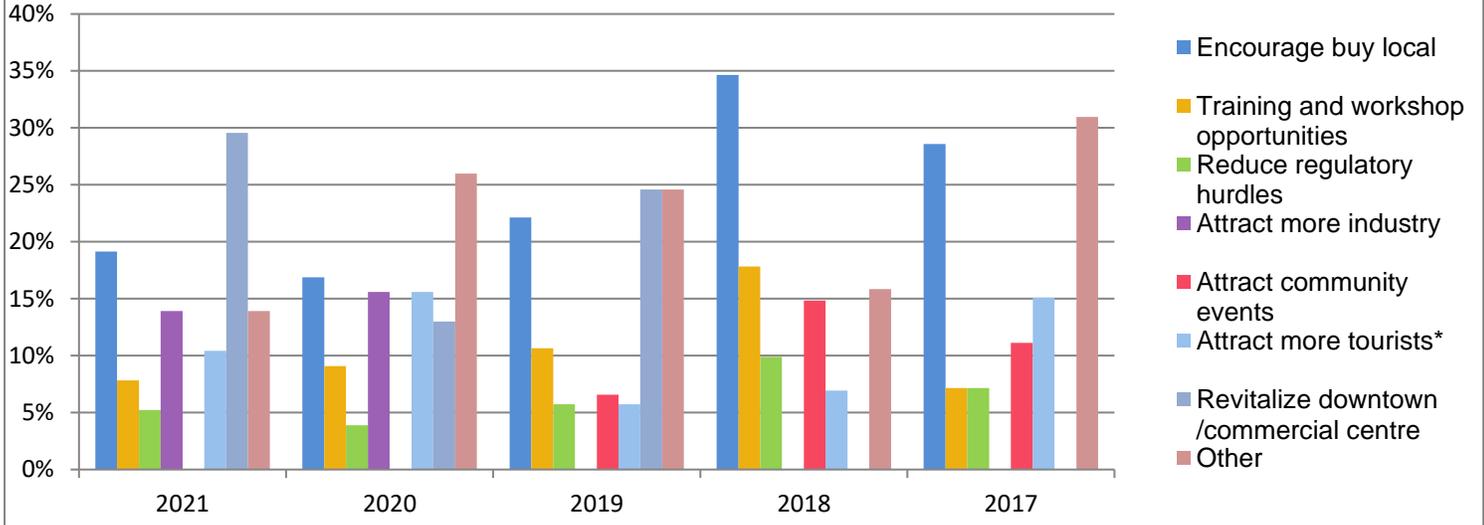
### Question 4: What can be done to help your business thrive?

A number of respondents in 2021 identified revitalization of the downtown/commercial centre as a major area of opportunity. Planning currently underway for Mountainview Square and Nechako Centre will work to help mitigate these concerns into 2022. The results also indicate that encouraging local shopping remains an important initiative to the business sector in Kitimat.

Some responses under the "Other" category include:

- Staffing support
- Support competing with online sales
- Promoting the vibrancy of the region
- Longer mall hours

## What can be done to help your business thrive?



### \*Note:

In 2016, "Attract additional industry" was offered as a possible response. It has since been removed as a response option because it was by far the most common response.

In 2019, "Revitalize downtown/commercial centre" was offered as a possible response.

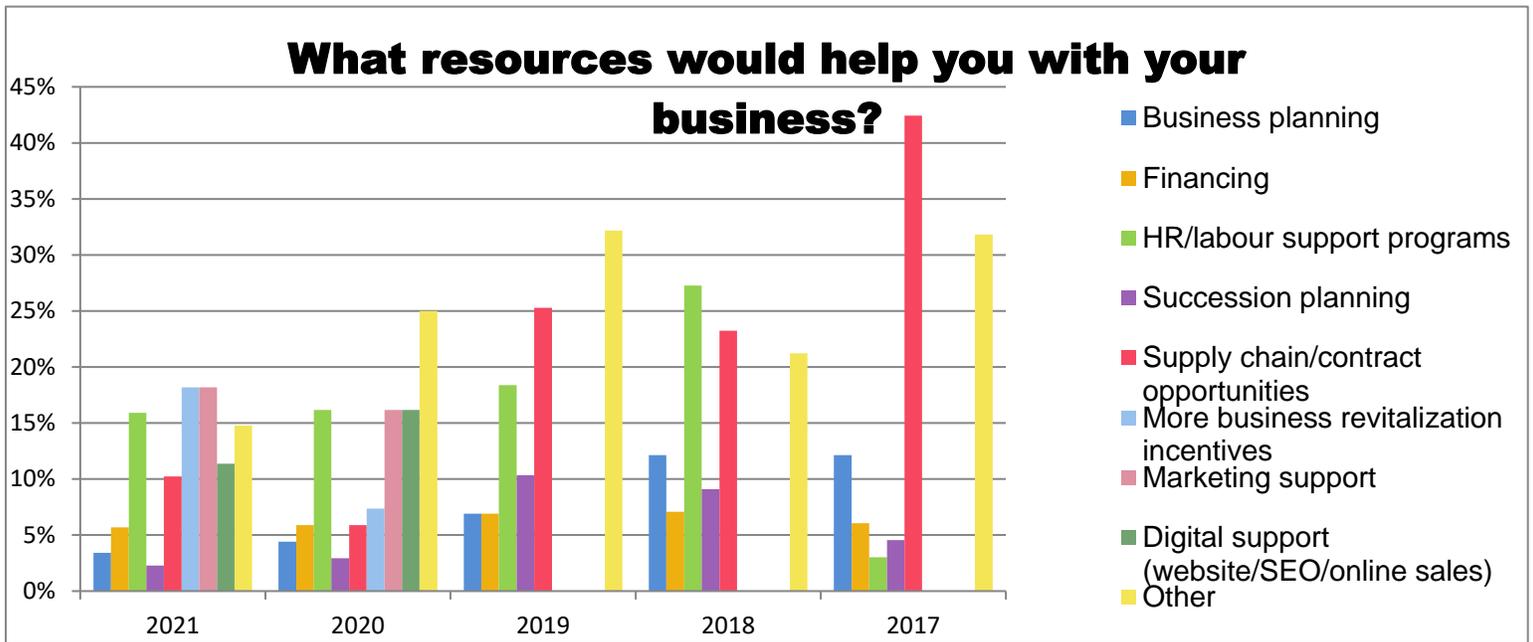
In 2020, "Attract more community events" was removed and "Attract more industry" was offered as a possible response.

## Question 5: What resources would help you with your business?

The resources most needed by businesses this year are HR/labour support programs. This is the opposite of 2017 and is a clear indication that businesses are feeling the impact from increased economic activity and struggling to find skilled employees.

Some responses under the "Other" category include:

- Supporting with funding requests
- Access to commercial space
- Creating a community that's attractive to live in
- Website development
- Community infrastructure (outdoor seating and garbage bins)



**\*Note:**

In 2020, “More business revitalization incentives”, “Marketing support”, and “Digital support (website/SEO/online sales)” were offered as possible responses.

**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 participating businesses. The Chamber will work with member businesses to identify additional means of encouraging shop local activity.
- Seek out means of attracting and hosting additional events in Kitimat, as well as expanding tourism activity.
- 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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