

# BUSINESS WALK

KITIMAT 2024 REPORT



KITIMAT  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE



yáq<sup>w</sup>a  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

## 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 since 2015. This year, the District of Kitimat partnered with the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce and yáqwa Development Corporation to survey businesses within Kitimat and Kitamaat Village. The annual business walk is an opportunity for multiple stakeholders from partnering organizations and other community groups to meet business owners/operators in-person and get a feel for the commercial sector in Kitimat. As many businesses as possible are visited in one day to complete the short survey. Businesses that are missed had the opportunity to fill out a paper survey and return to the Economic Development office or complete the survey online through the Get Involved Kitimat page until November 8, 2024. Survey results are compiled into this report which is forwarded to Council and made available online and at the District office in the new year.

## 2024 Business Walk

In 2024, the annual Kitimat Business Walk was conducted on Wednesday, October 16. Twenty-five (25) volunteers canvassed local businesses to collect information about Kitimat's economic climate. Participants were from:

- District of Kitimat
- Kitimat Chamber of Commerce
- yáqwa Development Corporation
- Kitimat RCMP
- Ministry of Jobs Economic Development and Innovation
- Kitimat Economic Development Association
- Kitimat 50+ Society
- Kitimat Airshed Group
- WorkBC Kitimat
- Rio Tinto BC Works

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?

Two additional questions were included this year to determine how businesses want us to provide them with information and if any of the businesses want to be followed up with.

A total of 93 surveys were collected, in person and online, by November 8, 2024. This represents about 12% of all licensed businesses in Kitimat.

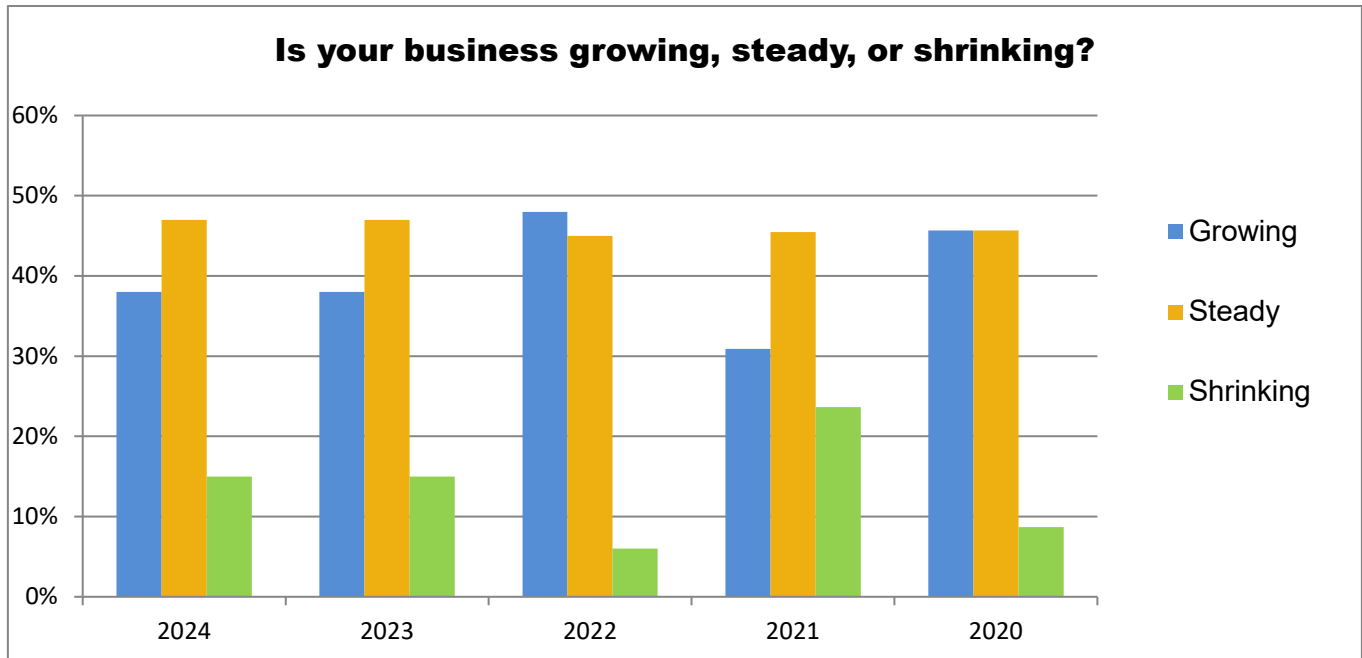
## Methodology

Volunteers worked in pairs to collect responses from businesses located in City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre, Kitamaat Village and a few businesses outside of these areas.

The event was advertised in advance on Get Involved Kitimat, on the District of Kitimat website through a press release and event page, social media, posters, the District newsletter and through the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce E-Blast. The press release was run by the local newspaper increasing the reach for businesses.

## SURVEY RESULTS

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



There was no change in the trend for this question between 2023 and 2024. Most businesses (47%) reported that they are experiencing steady operations this year. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of businesses believe they are growing, and fifteen percent (15%) believe they are shrinking. Some comments made by the businesses that identify as shrinking refer to the changes due to LNG Canada's move from peak construction to start up. Other reasons provided include recovery from COVID and increased competition in their industry locally.

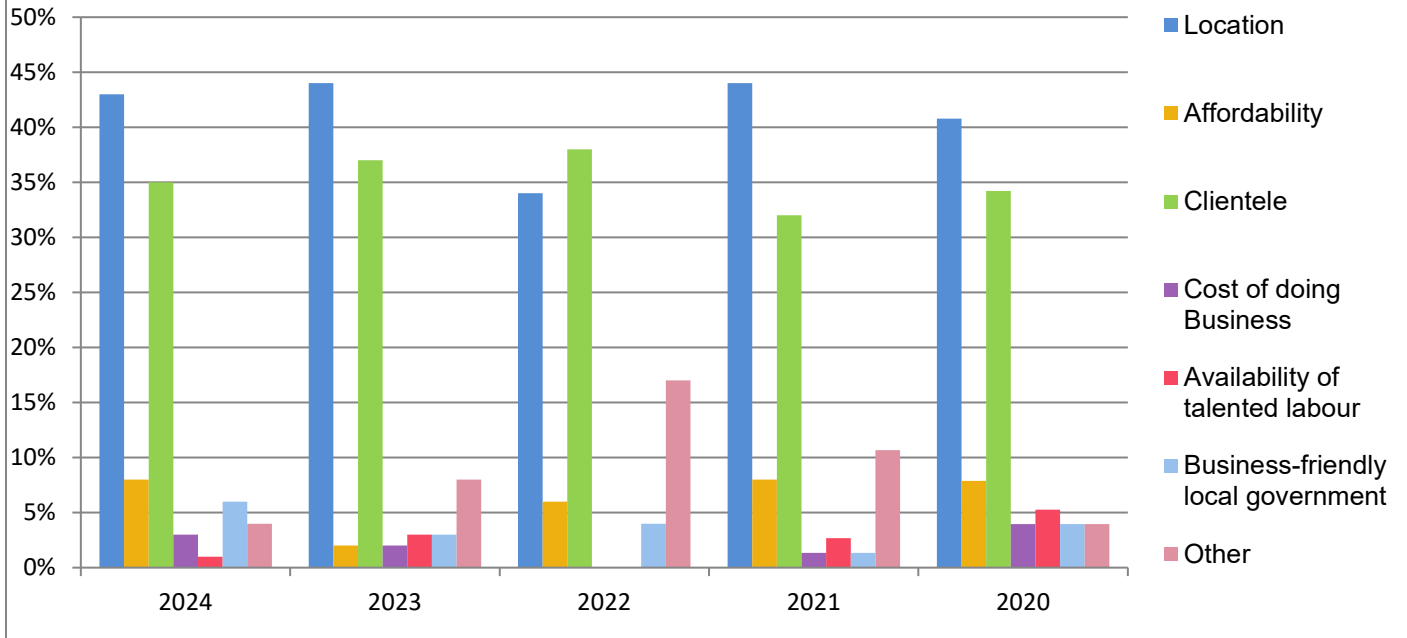
### Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the area?

"Location" (43%) and "Clientele" (35%) remain the top two reasons businesses like doing business in Kitimat. The fourth highest reason provided was "Business-friendly local government" (6%). This year, we see "Affordability" (8%) and "Cost of Doing Business" (3%) grow over their 2023 values of 2% each. This is a significant shift that shows movement towards improving the perception of Kitimat being welcoming to businesses and can spur more entrepreneurs to start or expand their business here. The positive trends for affordability, cost of doing business and business-friendly local government, should be nurtured to continue this upward trajectory.

Some responses under the "Other" category include:

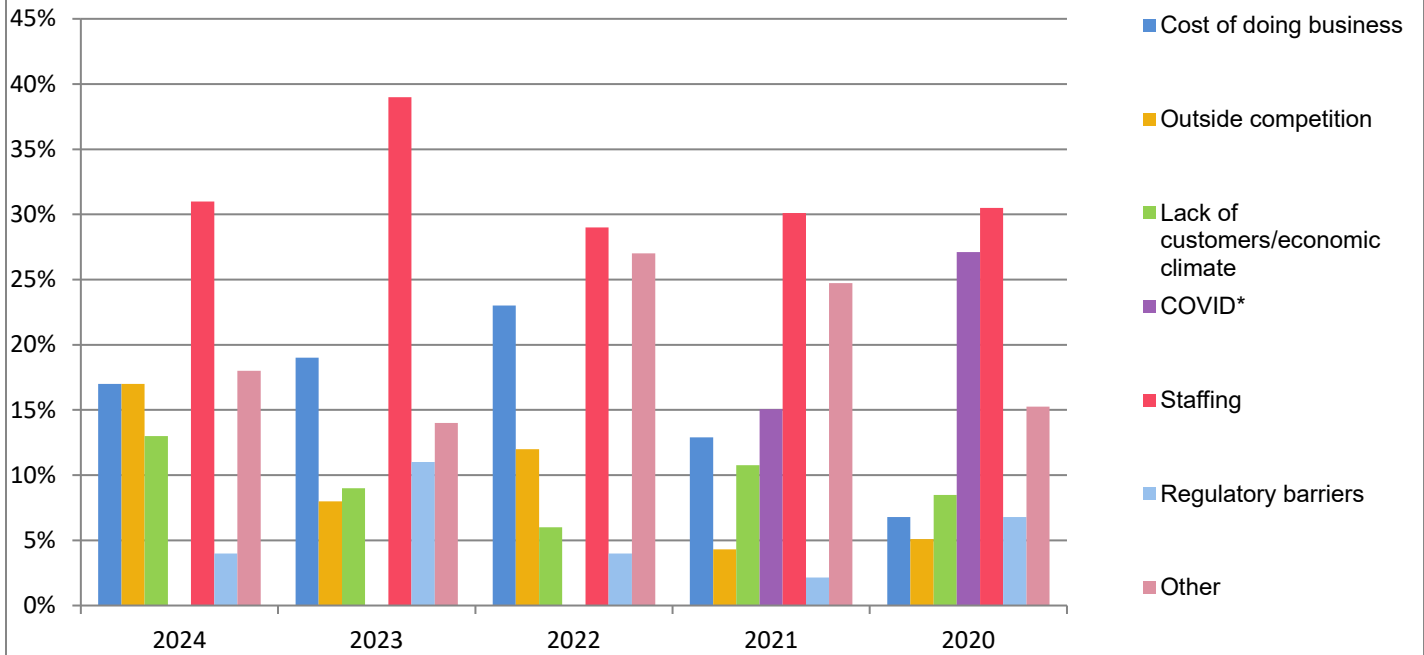
- The sense of community in Kitimat brings everyone together.
- Good landlords that are easy to work with.
- Beautification and the brewery have had a positive impact on the community.

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



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

#### What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?



**\*Note:**

In 2020, "COVID" was added as a possible response and removed in 2022.

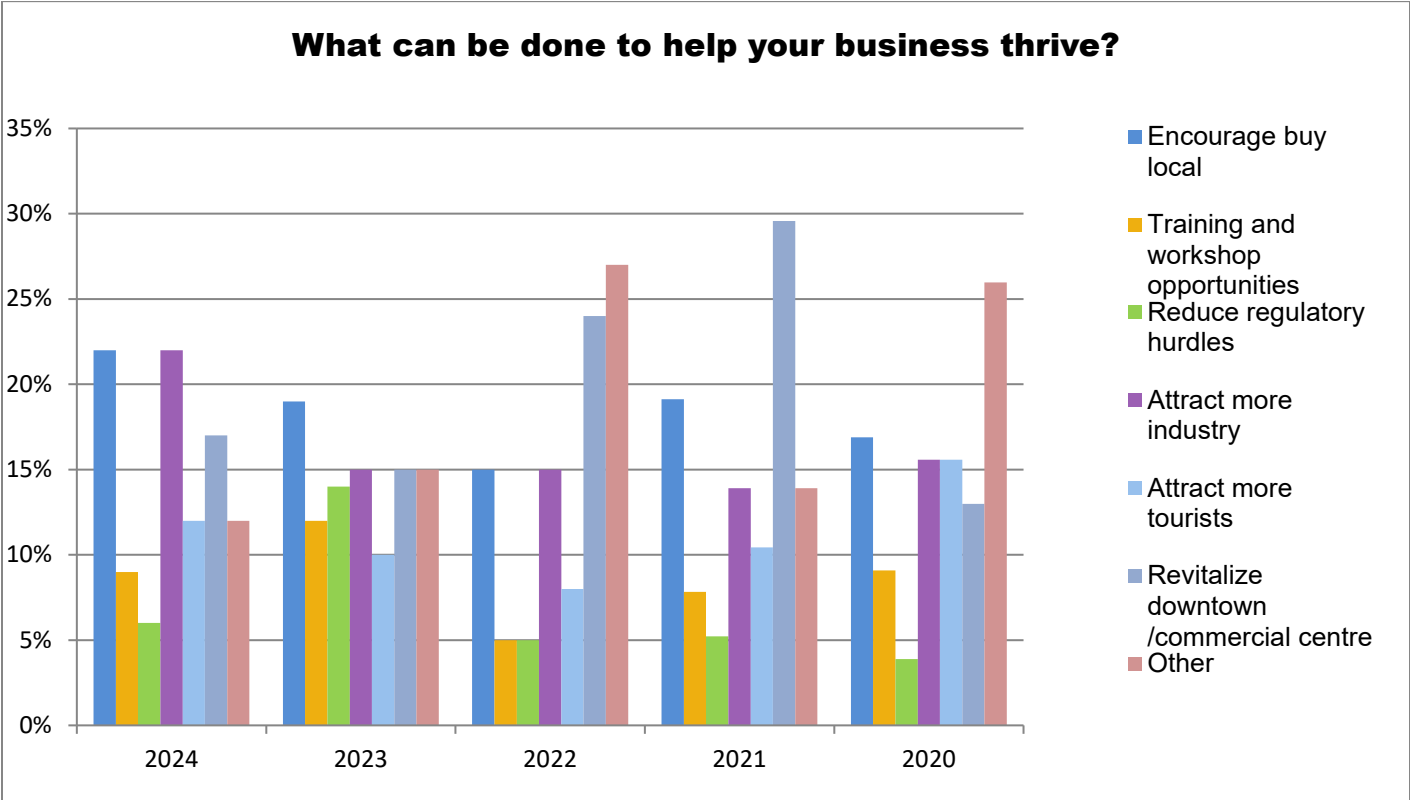
"Staffing" remains the greatest challenge for businesses in Kitimat. However, there has been a significant decline over the last year with only 31% of business identifying it as a challenge compared to the 39%

who did in 2023. “Regulatory hurdles” as the greatest challenge for businesses has also declined from 11% to 4%. The “Cost of doing business” and “Outside competition” rank second to “Staffing” and are tied at 17%. Although it does not rank amongst the top three challenges identified by businesses, there is a growing trend since 2022 of business who identify “Lack of customers/outside competition” as a challenge (6% in 2022, 9% in 2023, 13% in 2024). More businesses have identified this as a challenge in 2024 than any other year in this report. Eighteen percent (18%) of businesses consider their challenge different from the provided options and are represented by the “Other” category.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Accessibility into businesses from the streetscape and within the mall.
- Providing accessible parking.
- Finding adequate and affordable commercial or light industrial space for expansion.
- Succession and the need for more doctors to keep the existing doctors from being overworked.

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



“Encourage Buy Local” and “Attract More Industry” are tied at 22% for the most identified way to help businesses thrive in Kitimat. This is a growth for both responses from 19% and 15% respectively. requested (19%) than in 2022 (15%). The next highest response was “Revitalise Downtown/Commercial Centre” at 17% compared to 15% last year. Less businesses indicated “Reduce Regulatory Hurdles” (6%) and “Training and Workshop Opportunities” (9%) than last year.

From the comments provided, “shop local” has a wide interpretation that includes detaching people from relying heavily on online orders to bringing more trainings, workshops and conferences to the community.

Some suggestions under the “Other” category include:

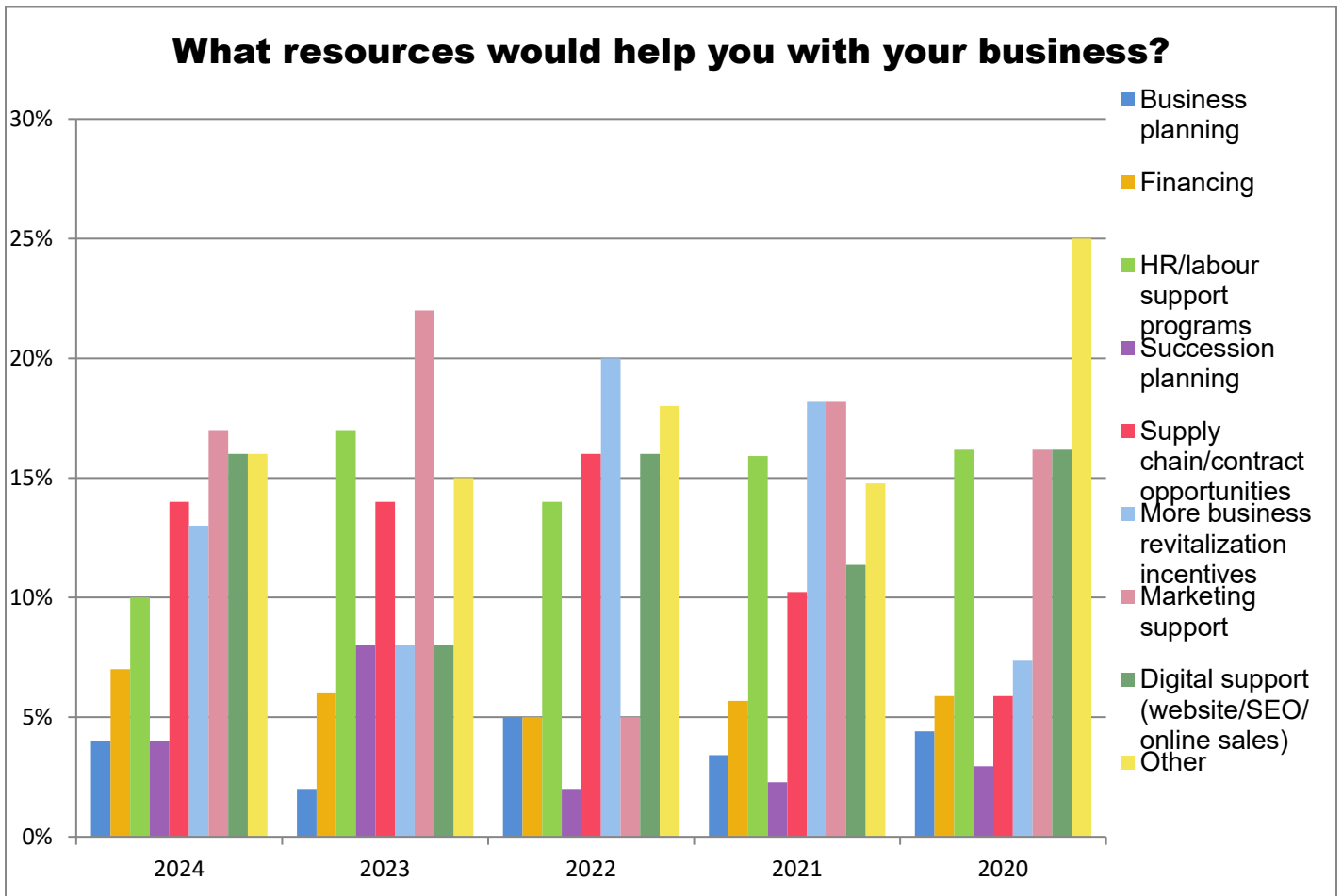
- Tax break.
- Encouraging larger suppliers to set up shops in Kitimat.
- More accessible commercial spaces for small or big businesses.
- Attracting more residents to grow their customer base.

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

Although “Marketing Support” remains the highest resource requested by businesses over the last two years it has declined to 17% from 22% in 2023. This is closely followed by a tie between the category “Other” (16%) and Digital Support (16%) which is a growth from previous years. “Supply Chain/Contract Opportunities” (14%) and “More Business Revitalization Incentives” (13%) follow closely in the hierarchy of resources businesses have identified they need.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Social media marketing.
- Assistance with grant and proposal writing.
- Recruiting more healthcare workers.
- Public-realm improvements in the Mountainview Square area.



## **General Overview**

Businesses interviewed this year had a total of 842 employees. This is an average of 9.3 employees per business compared to the average of 9.6 per businesses surveyed last year. Most employees this year are full time employees (70%). Twenty-three percent (23%) of the employees were part-time with the remaining 7% being temporary and seasonal workers (4% and 3% respectively).

When asked how they would like to receive information, 42% of businesses expressed a preference for mailouts, 35% preferred receiving information by email and less than 25% opted for communication through social media (10%) and workshops (14%). Knowing how best to reach businesses is critical for implementing programs and will shape how resources businesses have identified a need for will be shared with them. Thirty-three of the businesses surveyed requested a follow up from the District or Chamber of Commerce and will be followed up with in the new year.

Following the Business Walk last year, the District of Kitimat worked with the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce and yáqʷa Development Corporation on a variety of business programs including the Kitimat Business Bootcamp, Kitimat Business Builders Competition, Keep it Local Kitimat campaign, Entrepalooza 2024 and the Business Façade Improvement Program. Through these programs, we were able to engage over 40 businesses and address areas of need noted in the 2023 Kitimat Annual Business Walk. Sponsorship for these programs were provided by Rio Tinto, LNG Canada and the Northern Sentinel.

## **What's Next?**

The District of Kitimat will continue to work with local, regional and provincial partners on programs to strengthen and diversify the local economy.

The District of Kitimat in partnership with the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce and yáqʷa Development Corporation will:

- Continue workforce and resident attraction marketing through the Kitimat Bound project and improve awareness of the program and resources available to businesses for recruitment.
- Continue to improve the reach and impact of the Keep it Local Kitimat brand through marketing campaigns and more visual representation within the community.
- Work with the Leisure Services department and Kitimat Chamber of Commerce to increase the number of conferences and large events that are held in the community.
- Work with other departments to address concerns about public-realm improvements.
- Consider new programs and initiatives that better address business concerns/needs.
- Improve data sources for economic indicators to include supply chain and workforce data.
- Continue to advocate to upper levels of government through Council for the removal of regulatory hurdles that make doing business difficult.
- Continue to collaborate on revitalization initiatives (including public art and signage) and the improvement of commercial spaces within Kitimat.
- Continue to support businesses through business retention and expansion initiatives that will meet the identified needs for businesses.
- Develop resources that help entrepreneurs better understand business licensing, development processes and marketing opportunities.



# BUSINESS WALK

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