

BUSINESS WALK REPORT

KITIMAT 2020



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 until December 31. Survey results are compiled into this report which is forwarded to Council and made available online in the new year.

2020 Business Walk

In 2020 the Kitimat Business Walk was conducted during the afternoon of Tuesday, November 3. Six participants canvassed local businesses to collect information about Kitimat's economic climate. Participants were from:

- Kitimat Chamber of Commerce
- District of Kitimat staff

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 until December 4, 2020. A total of 48 surveys were collected.

Methodology

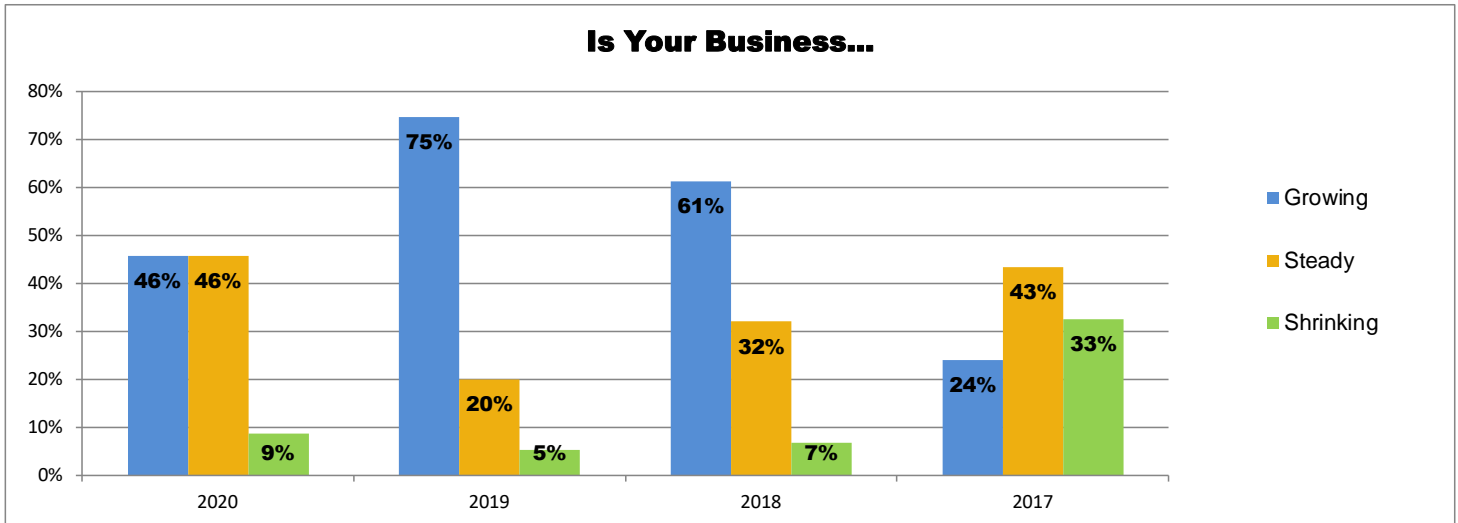
Due to COVID-19, participants in the Business Walk worked independently. Areas covered included City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre and a few businesses outside of these areas.

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

Findings

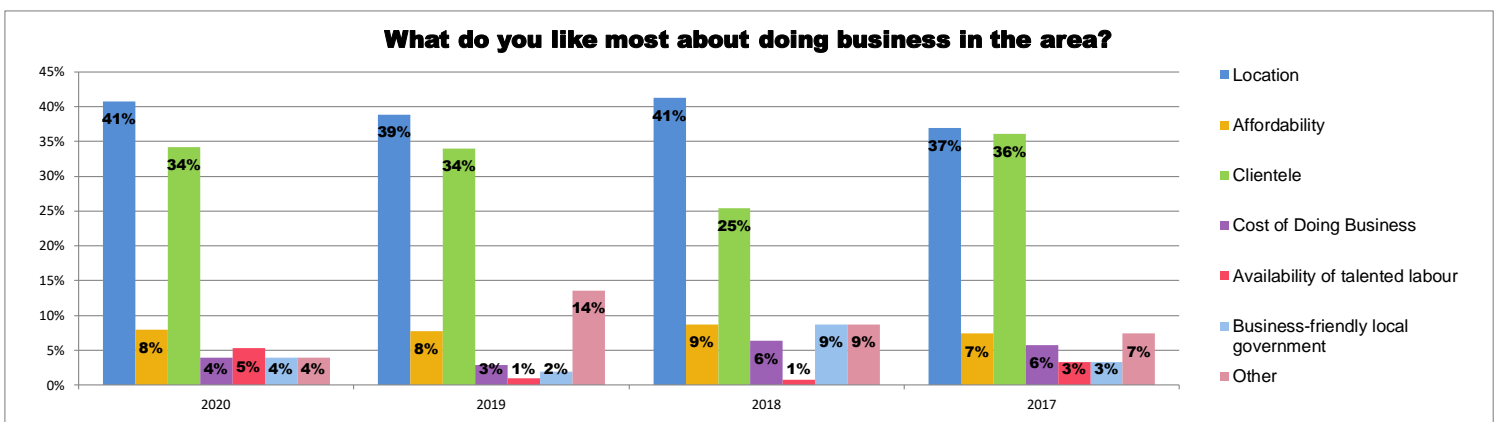
Question 1: Is your business growing, steady, or shrinking?

Compared to previous years, more businesses in 2020 said they were 'steady' and fewer said that they were 'growing'. This likely represents a levelling off of economic activity following LNG Canada's final investment decision.



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

Year over year, location and clientele remain the top reasons local businesses enjoy operating in Kitimat. This remains the case in 2020.

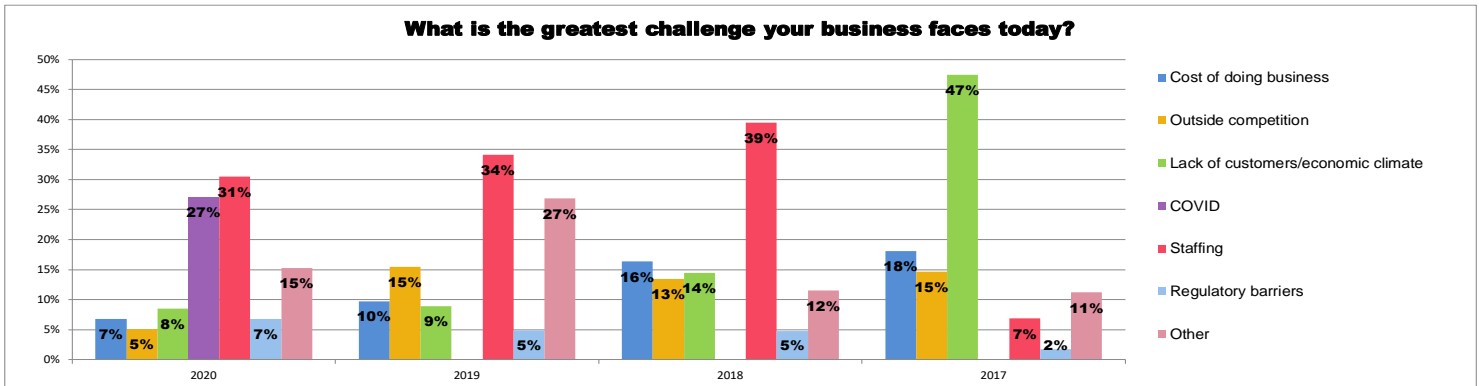


Question 3: What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?

In 2020, Covid-19 and associated health restrictions represented a major challenge for businesses in Kitimat, and across B.C. Staffing remains a challenge for businesses in 2020, compared to previous years.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Competition with online shopping and shopping outside of the community
- ‘Boom and bust’ cycles of employment
- ‘Walkability’ of commercial areas



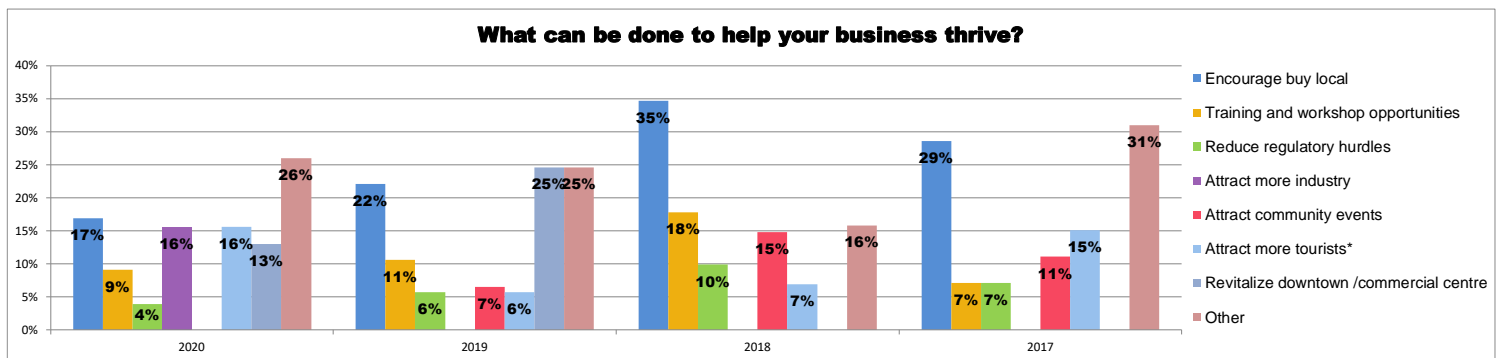
*Note: In 2020 COVID was offered as a possible response.

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

The results indicate that encouraging the buy local concept remains an important initiative to the business sector in Kitimat, coupled with attracting more industry and tourists.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Supporting marketing efforts
- Supporting employee recruitment and retention
- Housing affordability
- Attracting more businesses



***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.

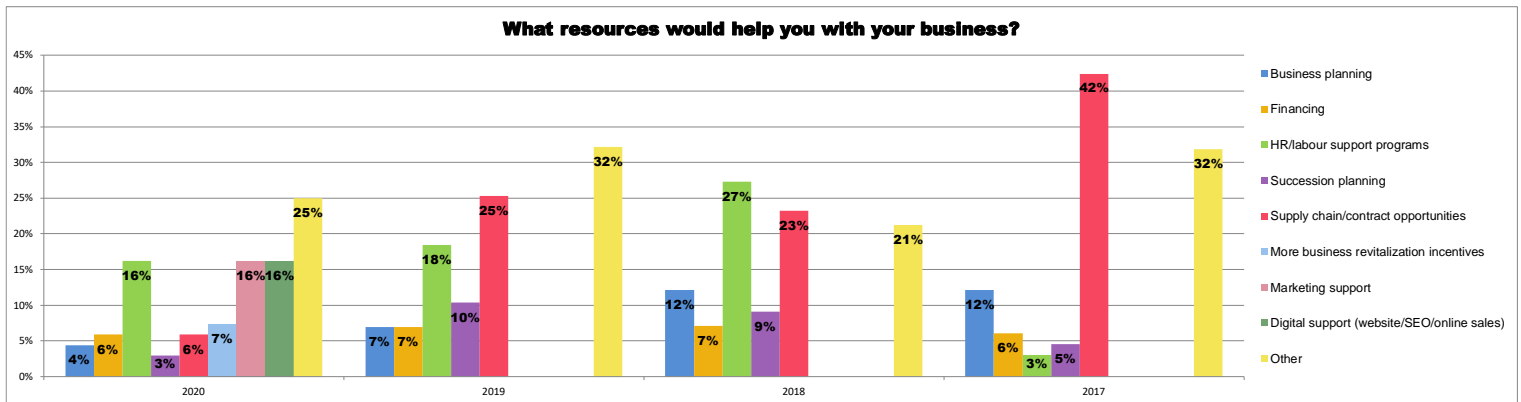
In 2020, “Attract more community events” was removed and “Attract more industry” was offered as a possible response.

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

In 2020, financing was the highest ranked resource to help businesses thrive. HR/Labour support programs, marketing support, and digital support tied for second as important resources for the success of businesses.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Asset management through the District (ie: water pooling in parking lots, garbage removal, pot holes, etc.)
- Allowing businesses to have patios
- Increase community events
- Social media support and website maintenance



***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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