

# BUSINESS WALK REPORT

## KITIMAT 2022



## **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 and Council, Kitimat Chamber of Commerce staff and directors, 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 had the opportunity to fill out the paper survey and return to the Economic Development office or complete the survey online at [www.kitimat.ca](http://www.kitimat.ca) until November 29, 2022. 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.

## **2022 Business Walk**

In 2022, the annual Kitimat Business Walk was conducted on Tuesday, November 15. Eight 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?

To include as many businesses as possible in the survey, businesses were also given the opportunity to submit their forms at a later date and provide input on the questions online. The online survey was made available on the District of Kitimat website for two weeks.

A total of 33 surveys were collected, in person and online, by November 29, 2022.

## **Methodology**

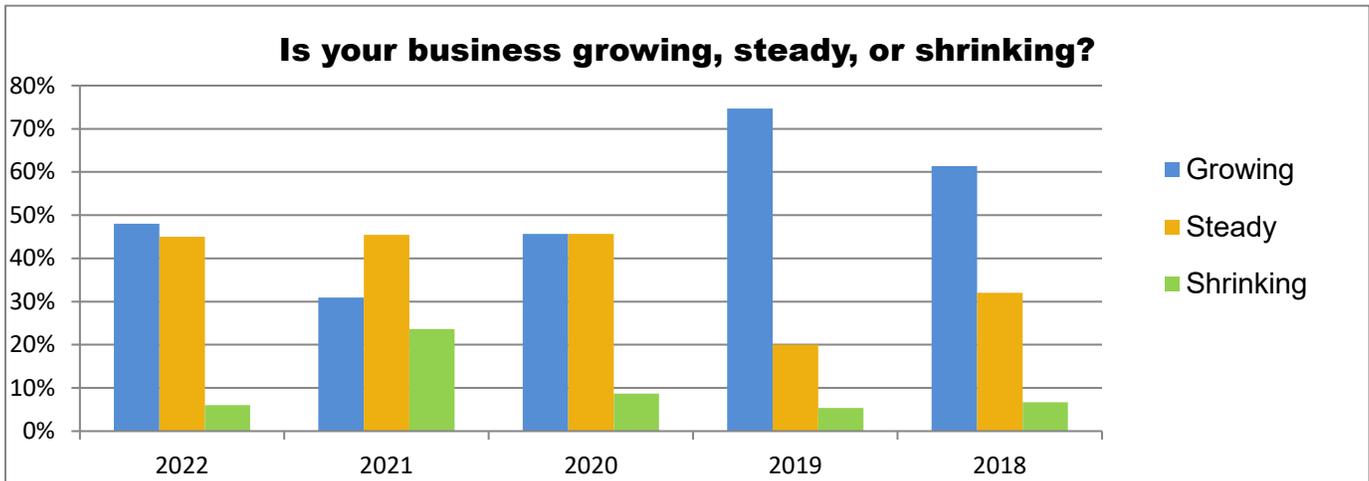
Areas covered by the participants in-person included City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre and a few businesses outside of these areas.

The event was advertised in advance on the District of Kitimat website, social media, and through the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce E-Blast. In addition, a press release to promote the event was picked up by the local radio and newspaper.

## SURVEY RESULTS

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

Compared to the last two years, more businesses have reported that they are growing or have remained steady. Although there are still over 20% more businesses that reported they were growing in 2019 compared to the current year, the large disparity can be attributed to external factors such as the announcement of LNG Canada’s final investment decision in 2018/2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The positive trend of businesses reporting growth shows local businesses are well on their way to recovery.

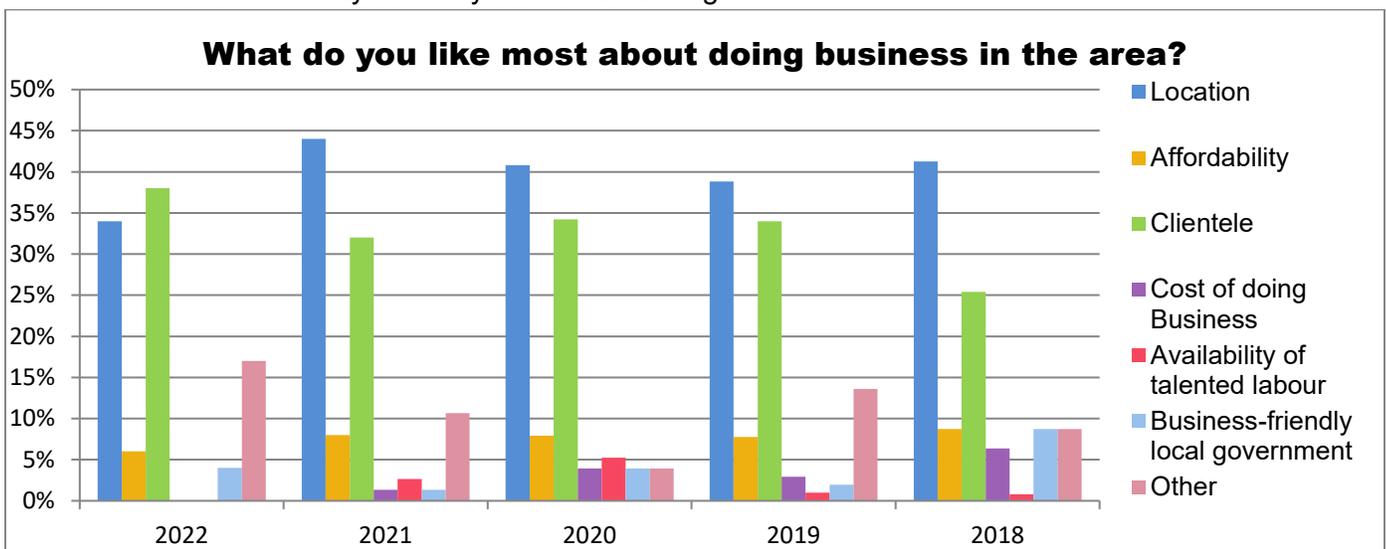


### Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the area?

As in previous years, the top two reasons businesses enjoy operating in Kitimat are “Location” and “Clientele”. This year, we see a slight shift as more businesses indicate clientele as their primary reason for operating here. Although this indicates a strong sense of community, it may indicate less businesses feel a strong sense of “place” than in previous years.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Well established
- Sense of community. Friendly. Own the building



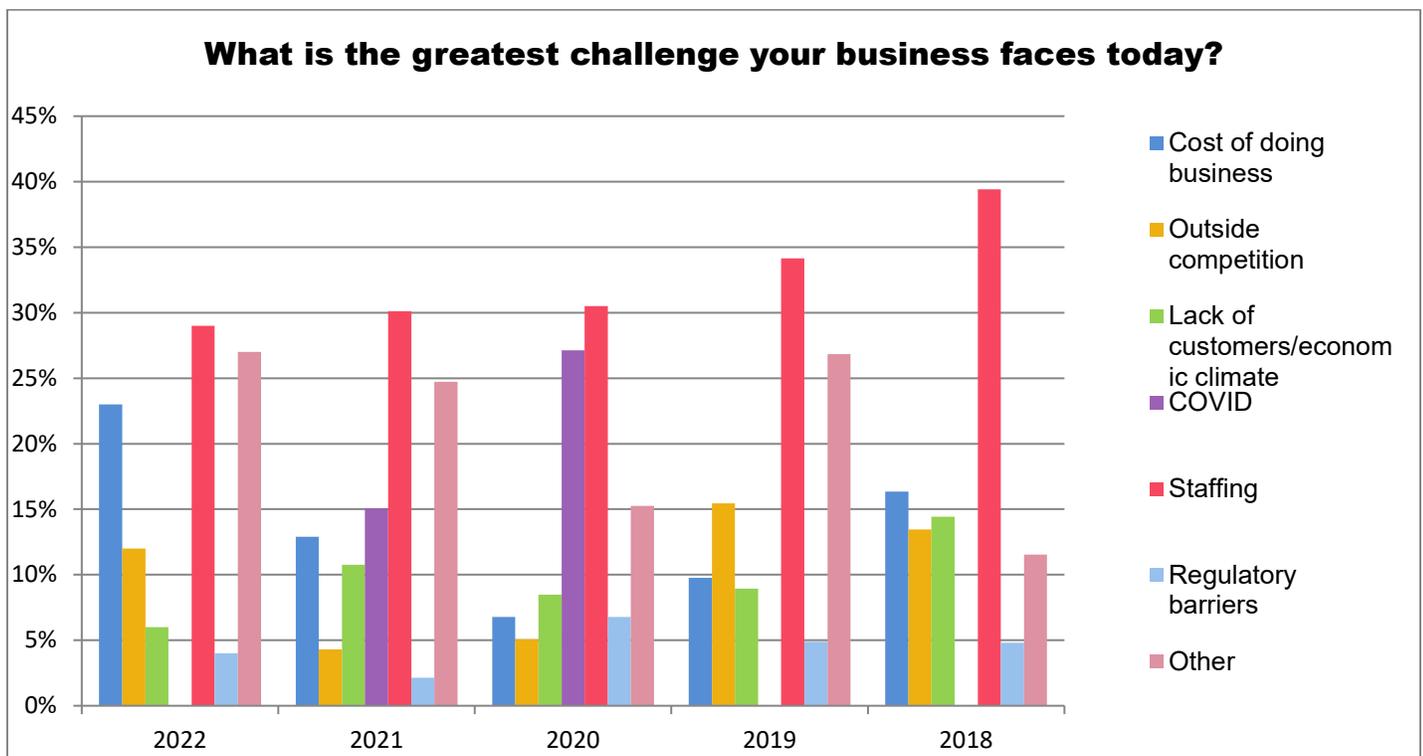
### Question 3: What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?

The greatest challenge identified by businesses is “Staffing”. This has been identified as one of the top challenges for businesses since 2015. The “Cost of doing business” is ranked as the second greatest challenge for businesses for the last two years. However, more businesses have noted the high cost of doing business in this year’s survey than the previous year.

“COVID-19” was removed as an option in this year’s survey. It is important to note that no businesses remarked on it being a challenge in the comments provided.

A higher number of responses were received under the “Other” category than in previous years. Some responses under this category include:

- Hard to get maintenance done - short staff for maintenance companies. Not enough trades people in Kitimat. High costs to bring trades from out of town.
- Supply chain
- Location- having to focus more on advertising to people than over the internet
- Staffing due to cost of living
- Large projects not getting approved provincially/federally



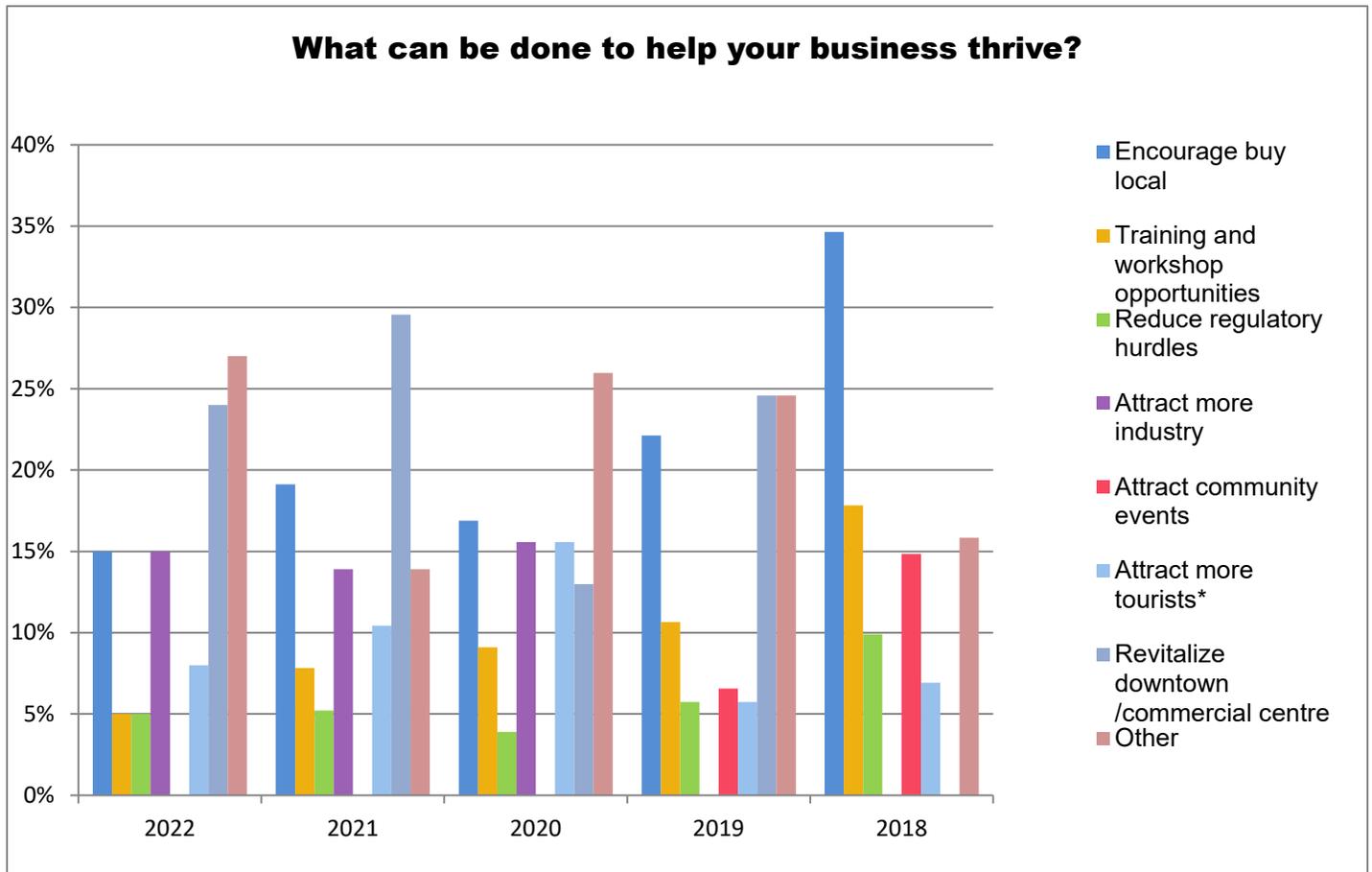
### Question 4: What can be done to help your business thrive?

Most businesses identified solutions under the “Other” category. The solutions were varied and include:

- More parking and storage
- Visibility/Signage
- More retail stores, businesses and walk in services
- More facilities to attract more clientele

- More trades people in the area

Second to the other category, businesses identified revitalizing downtown and commercial centres as a priority. Encourage buy local and attract more industry are tied as the third highest need for 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.

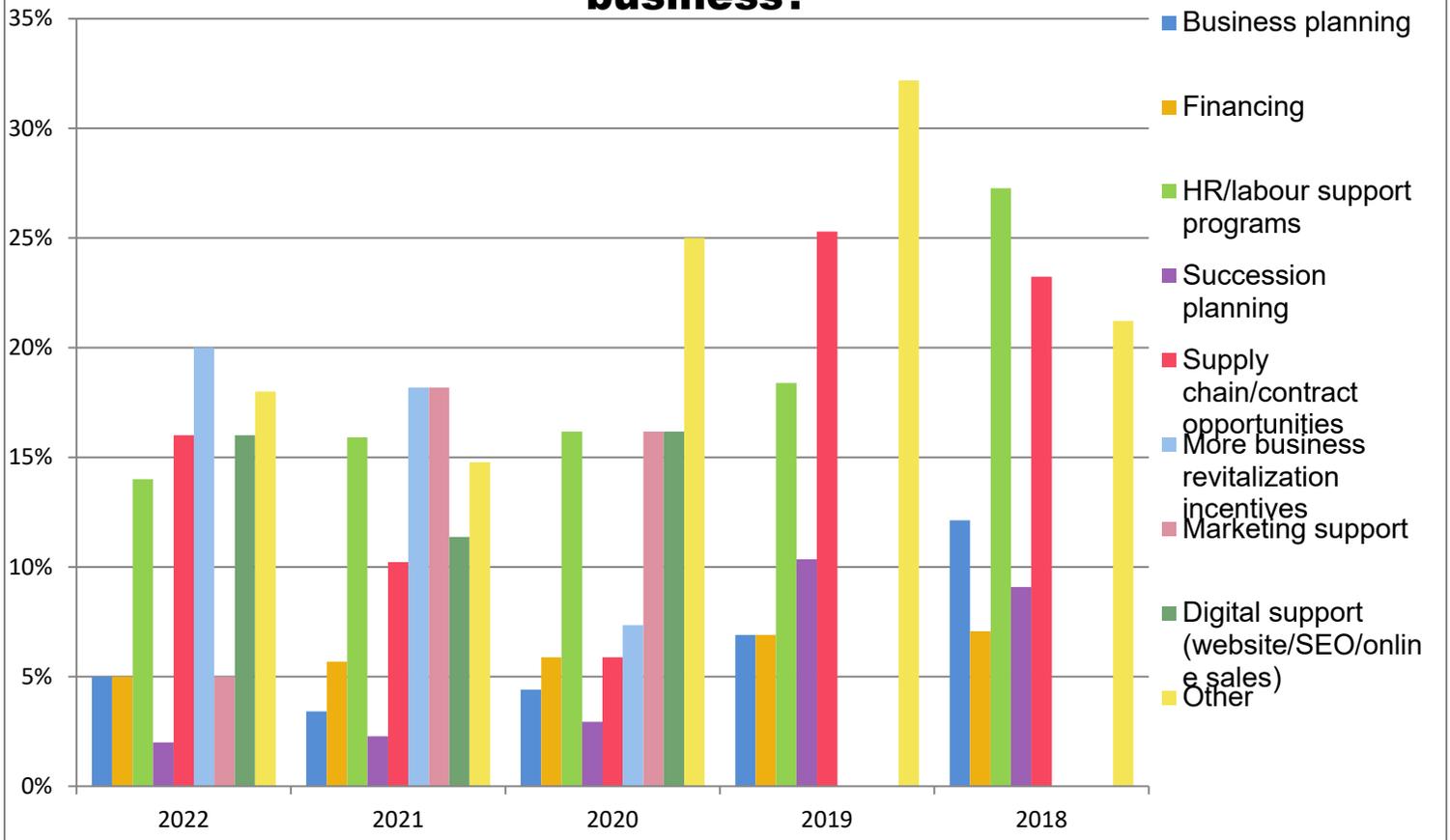
**Question 5: What resources would help you with your business?**

Most businesses identified needing “More Business Revitalization Incentives” than in previous years. Given this business walk was conducted shortly after the Commercial Centre Revitalization Tax Exemption bylaw was passed by council, it is safe to assume businesses were not yet aware of this program. The second highest resource requested by businesses are for “Digital Support” and “Supply chain/contract opportunities”.

Some responses under the “Other” category include:

- Networking opportunities
- Highway signs/Centralized advertising
- Creative and consistent digital support
- Expand more businesses in Nechako Area

## What resources would help you with your business?



**\*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 economy. This will involve supporting commercial activity of businesses and industry.

The District of Kitimat and the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce will:

- Work with local businesses to increase awareness of available programs. This will include marketing business revitalization programs like the Commercial Centre Revitalization Tax Exemption program and the Business Façade Improvement program.
- Encourage local shopping through Love Kitimat and other campaigns. The Chamber will work with member businesses to identify additional means of encouraging shop local activity.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to expand the available commercial spaces for businesses to attract new businesses and examine ways to reduce the cost of doing business here.
- Work on signage and other identified needed resources such as digital support.
- Partner to investigate solutions for staffing challenges in addition to marketing the lifestyle and tourism opportunities that attract more people to visit and move to Kitimat.



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