

Business Walks Survey 2015

General Results

Within a two hour period, 11 volunteer teams met with 156 businesses across Vernon. Most of the locations within the community were the same as in 2013 and 2014 in order to provide comparable year over year data. This year two new locations were added to the survey, and one location was removed as a result of previous years' low response rate.

Businesses that were interviewed were located in the following areas:

Repeated Locations:

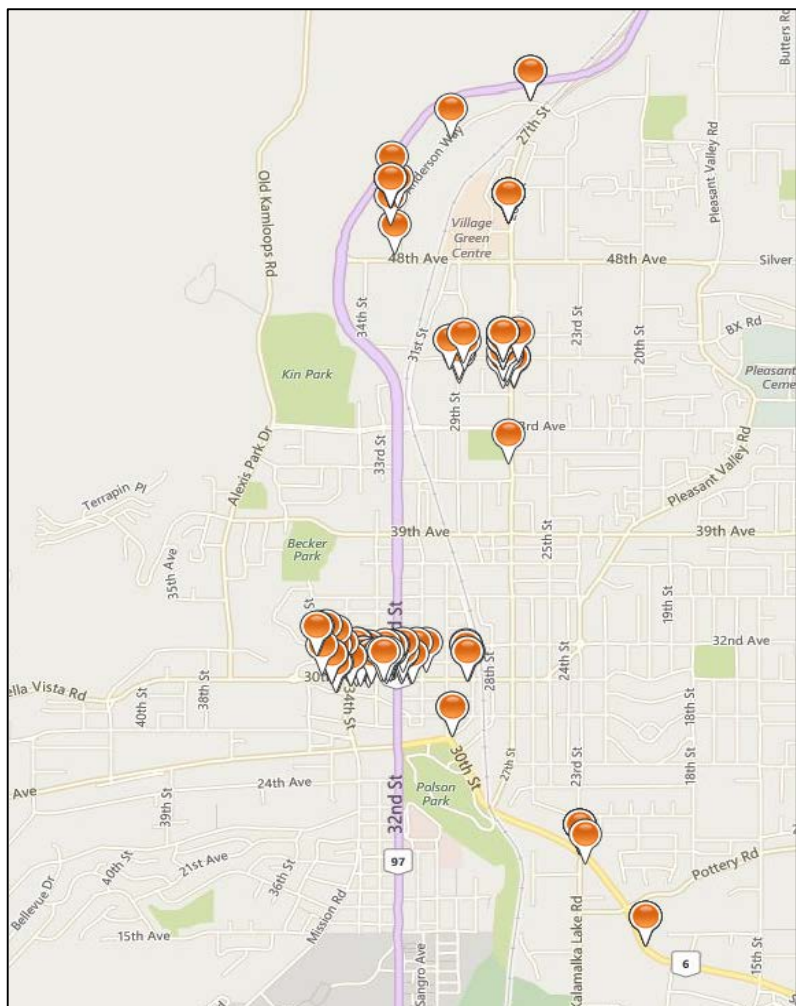
- Downtown - 30 Avenue
- Fruit Union Plaza and Highway 6
- Polson Mall and Kalamalka Lake Road
- Vernon Square
- Village Green Mall
- Anderson Way

New Locations:

- 4300-4420 27 Street
- 4300-4607 29 Street

Removed Location:

- Okanagan Landing Plaza and 25 Ave.



Map 1: Business Walks Survey Location Map
(Source: Executive Pulse, 2015)

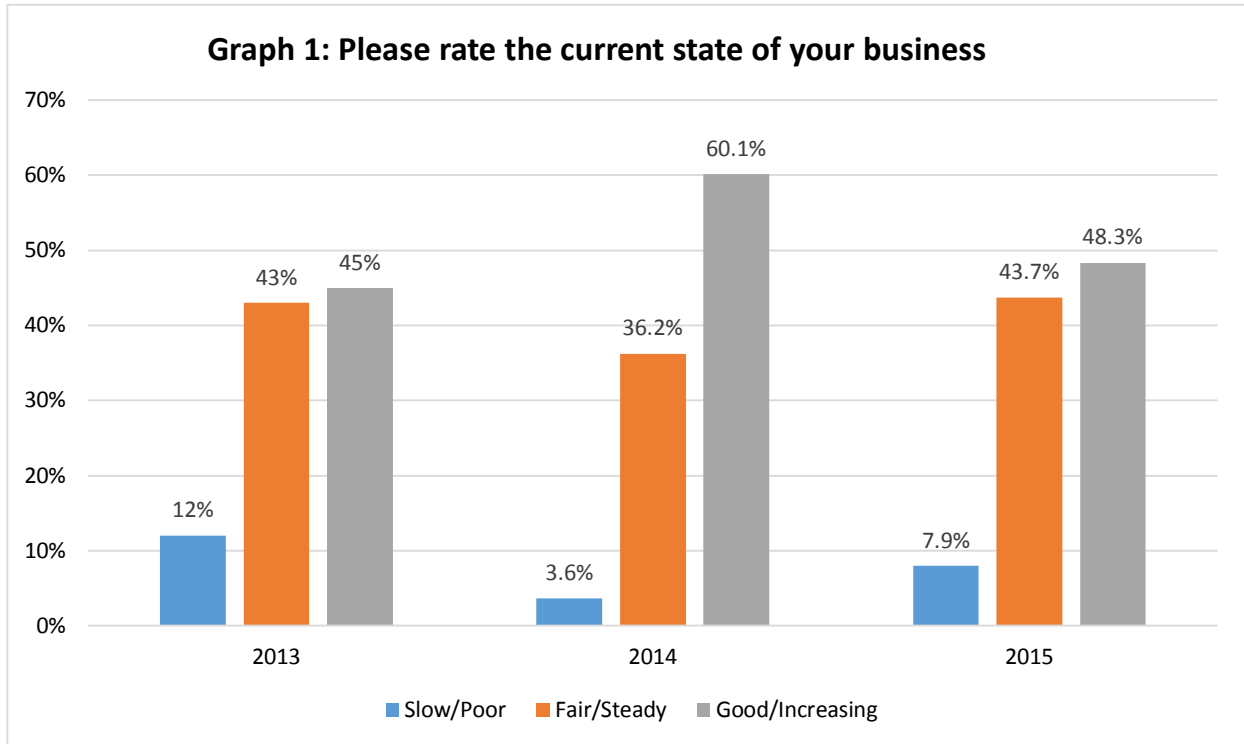
Survey Results

92% OF THE BUSINESSES IN THE 2015 BUSINESS WALK SURVEY ARE EITHER STEADY OR INCREASING

THE 156 BUSINESSES INTERVIEWED EMPLOY A TOTAL OF 1,262 PEOPLE

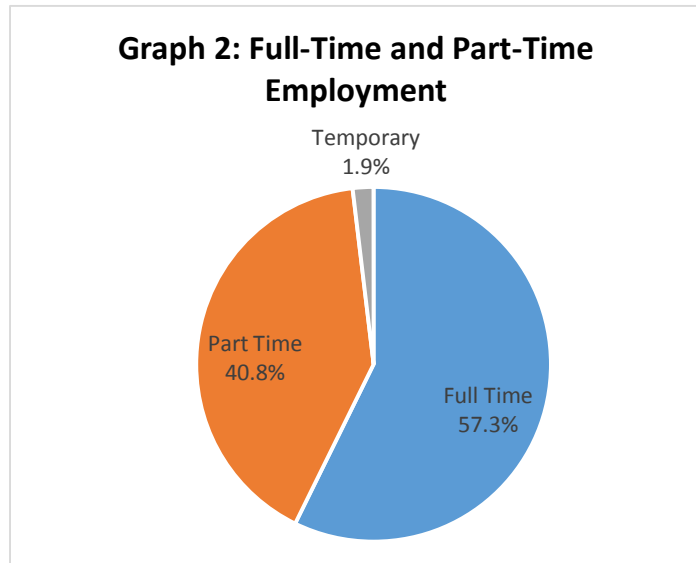
Question 1: Please rate the current state of your business?

A total of 48.3% of businesses surveyed responded that business was **good/increasing**, 20% lower than last year survey (60.1%). In 2015, 92% of the businesses surveyed were either fair and steady or good and increasing, compared to 96.3% in 2014 and 88% in 2013. 7.9% of respondents rated their business state as slow/poor, compared to 3.6% in 2014 and 12% in 2013.



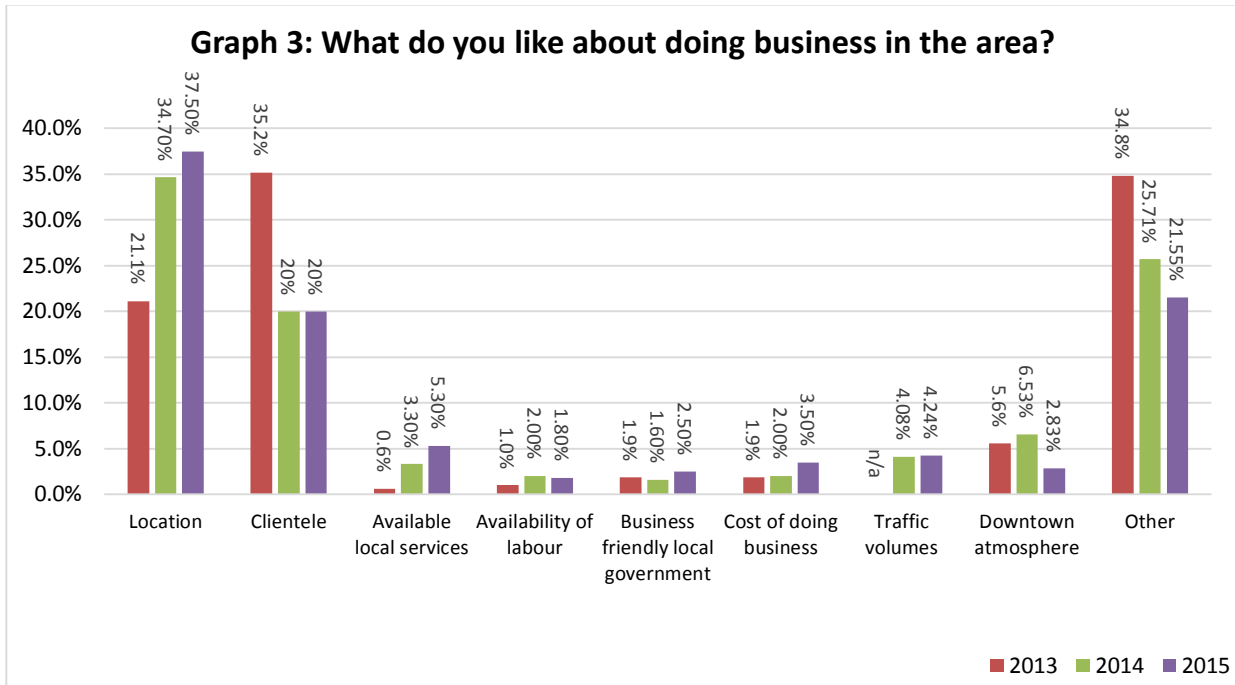
Question 2: What is the average number of employees including yourself?

The 156 businesses interviewed employ a total of 1,262 people. 57% are in a full time position and 43% are part time. The number of employees ranged from 1 to 53 and the average number of employees per business is 8. 79% of the businesses interviewed employ 10 people or less.



Question 3: What do you like about doing business in the area?

The third question was asked to gain a better understanding of why businesses chose a particular area of the community, or Vernon in general, as a place to do business. In 2015, 37.5% of businesses highlighted that **location** was the key factor, while 20% highlighted **clientele** as the main factor. 21.5% of respondents choose other factors, such as availability of free parking, , the size of community, the city demographic and proximity to tourist attractions.



Question 4: What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

Question 4 was added in last year’s Business Walk Survey and was asked to gain insight into the main challenges local businesses are facing. In the 2015 Survey, more answer options were added to the question. A total of 25.3% of respondents stated **finding employees** and 15.2% stated **parking** (lack of supply, price, over-enforcement etc.), was their primary challenge. 31.8% choose other challenges, as presented in table 1.

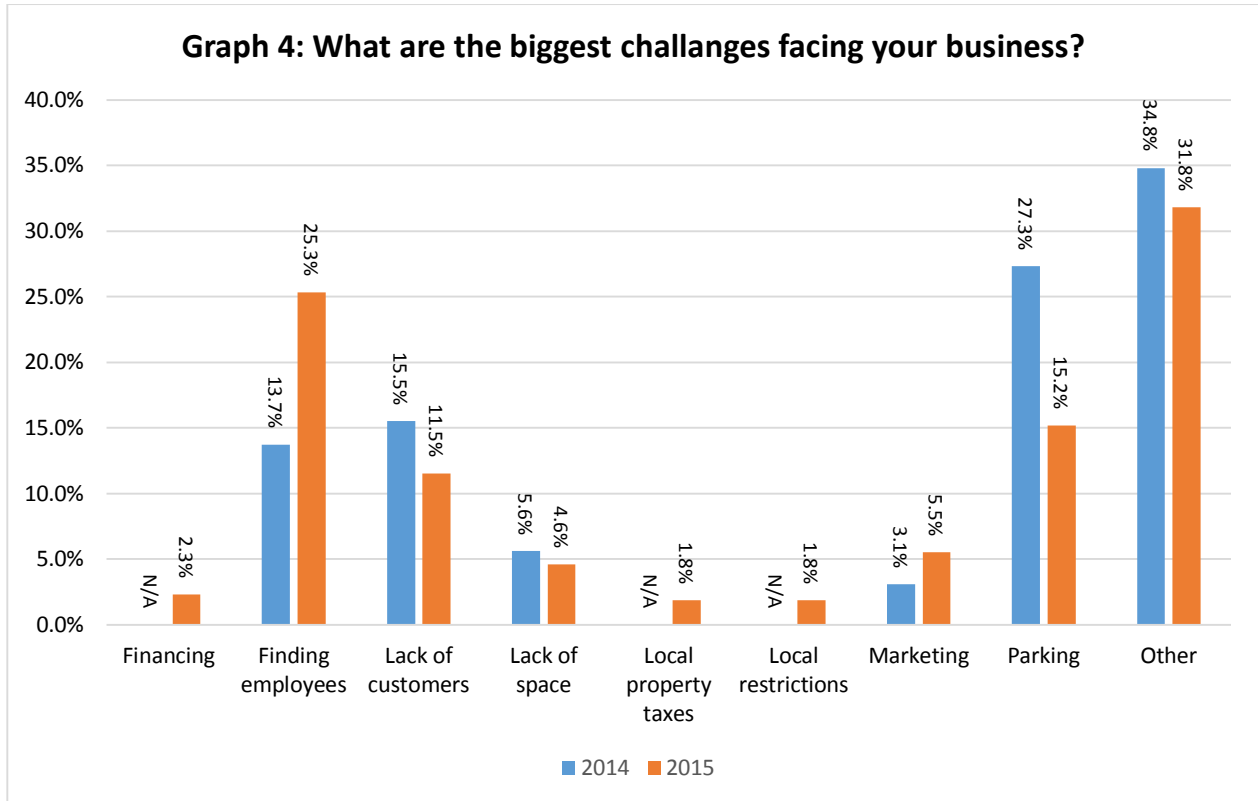


Table 1: Main other challenges local businesses are facing

Seasonal market	30%
Marketing and online shopping	23%
Lease and rent costs	13%
Aging community	11%
Lack of space	9%
Community safety and homelessness	9%
Bylaw enforcement and City development process	6%

Question 5: What can be done to help your business thrive?

The responses for this question were the most diverse, ranging in comments about parking challenges, Bylaw enforcement, street maintenance, crime prevention, marketing and advertising, Downtown revitalization and community programs. In comparing to the previous year’s Business Walks Survey, no comments were raised about City services and taxes.

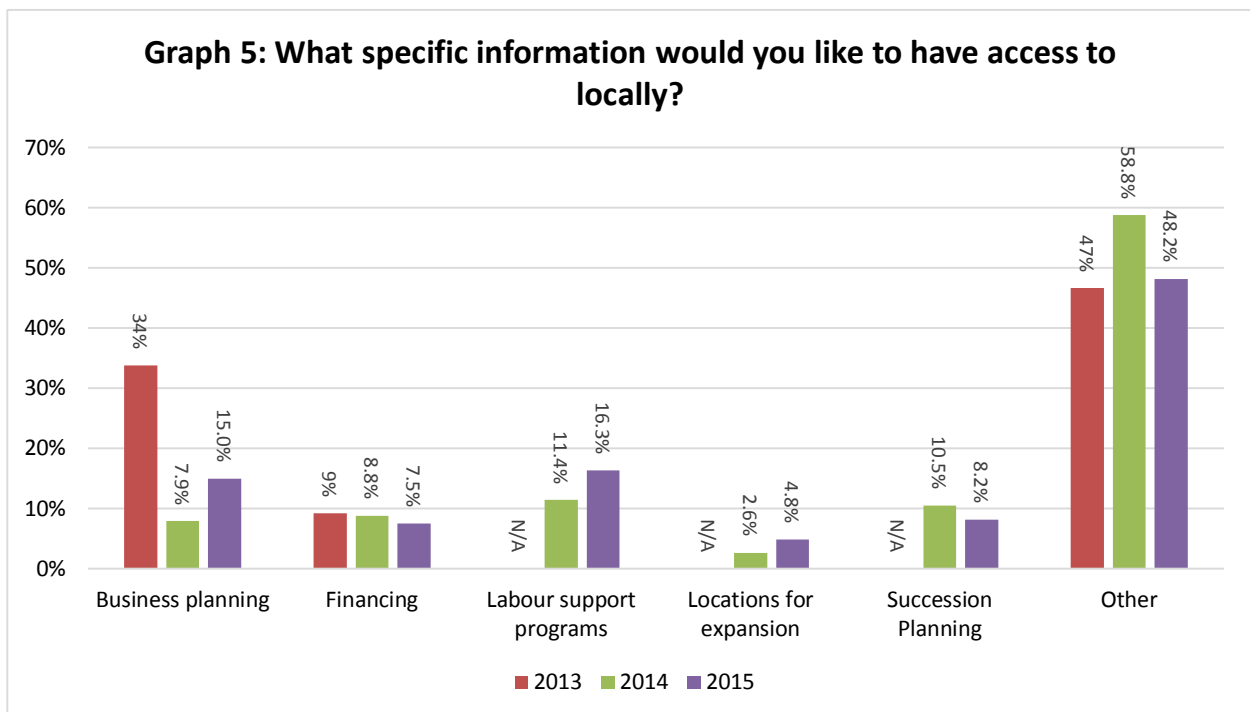
Table 2: What can be done to help your business thrive?

Parking (lack of supply, price, over-enforcement etc.)	38%
Local programs and events	22%
Marketing and advertising	16%
Downtown revitalization	15%
Crime prevention	5%
Attract young and new families to the city	4%

Question 6: What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

The final question was geared toward finding out what resources are required locally to better assist the business community. The most common assistance required was **labour support programs** (16.3%) and assistance with **business planning** (15%). 8.2% requested access to **succession planning** information and 7.5% requested information on **financing**.

Almost half of respondents (48.2%) requested **other** types of information, such as better access to local statistics data, City of Vernon plans, local events and information on marketing and social media opportunities and campaigns.



Walkers' Question

Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

One of the primary objectives of the Business Walks is to find out if there are immediate concerns that businesses may need assistance from the City of Vernon or other business support organizations. 9.6% of the businesses in the survey required some form of assistance, which is 6.3% less than the 2014 survey. Staff have begun the follow up process and will have completed all of the follow up by the end of the year, based on the determined urgency level.

